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Education

1998 Provincial Learning Assessment in English Language Arts (Listening and Speaking)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 1998 Provincial Learning Assessment in English Language Arts (Listening and Speaking) collected information on the listening and speaking performance of Saskatchewan students in Grades 5, 8 and 11. This assessment also examined students' opportunities to learn in the areas of listening and speaking.

A 26-person panel set standards for opportunity to learn and for student performance. The standard-setting panel consisted of teachers, educational administrators, parents, faculty from post-secondary educational institutions, representatives of the Indian and Métis community and representatives of the business community.

Saskatchewan students' reading and writing skills and practices were also assessed in 1998. Thirteen- and 16-year-olds participated in the 1998 School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) Reading and Writing Assessment, developed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. The results of the reading and writing assessment appear in *School Achievement Indicators Program, Reading and Writing Report, 1998*.

STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN

Differences in students' learning experiences and personal circumstances, as well as their ability, contribute to their opportunity to learn and, thus, to their achievements.

The assessment of students' listening and speaking skills and practices found that:

- Students were satisfied with their parents' support for their learning.
- All other measures of students' opportunities to learn fell below provincial expectations.
- In the classroom, students did not have sufficient opportunities to work in small groups and did not have enough experiences with guides, models and scaffolds for developing good listening and speaking skills.
- Fewer students than expected persisted to produce quality work, think about ways to improve their work and spend sufficient time on language arts homework.
- In the home, students had fewer opportunities than expected to express their ideas and opinions, and to participate in family discussions.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Students' listening and speaking skills were assessed through participation and interaction in small-group discussions and presentations as they worked on an assignment. Provincial expectations were set for a variety of listening and speaking dimensions.

Overall results showed that:

- Grade 5 students met provincial expectations for adequate listening and speaking performance. Expected numbers of students attained top-level performance for five of the six dimensions assessed.
- Grade 8 results were mixed. Students' use of language and their development and delivery of content in group presentations did not meet provincial expectations. However, these students met expectations for their participation and respect for conversational peers during group discussions.
- Grade 11 students showed adequate performance in all aspects of group discussion. Although they adequately developed the content of their group presentations, the language and style they used to deliver their presentations were short of provincial expectations.

STUDENTS' CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

In regard to students' classroom experiences, attitudes and practices, the 1998 assessment found that:

- Most students at all three grades said that good listening and speaking skills will be important in their adult lives.
- Students in higher grades perceived themselves to be better listeners than students in lower grades, but students' perceptions of their speaking ability was about the same in all three grades.
- Teachers and students differed in their perceptions of how frequently teachers give listening and speaking assignments, with teachers reporting greater frequency than students.
- Teachers at higher grades gave fewer listening and speaking assignments than teachers at lower grades.
- Teachers at higher grades were less likely to record students' listening and speaking achievements on report cards than teachers at lower grades.

INTRODUCTION

THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Oral language is a powerful tool for communicating, thinking and learning. It shapes, modifies, extends, and organizes thought. Oral language is a foundation for all language development and, therefore, the foundation of learning. It is the base for the other language strands. Through listening and speaking, students connect with others, learn concepts, develop vocabulary, and perceive the structure of the English language – essential components of learning. Students who have a strong oral language base have an academic advantage. School achievement depends on students' ability to display knowledge in a clear and acceptable form in speaking as well as in writing.

Listening and speaking link individuals to society. Exchanges that students have with their peers, teachers, and significant others can help them come to know the world in more personal and socially responsible ways. When students talk about their ideas and listen to the ideas of others, they clarify their thinking. They can figure out what they believe and where they stand on issues.

The written word has taken on an authority in our society, sometimes at the expense of the spoken word. Yet, in reality, it is the spoken word that will dominate the lives of most students. Listening and speaking are constants, regardless of what students do in their lives. Facility with language is an asset in daily activities and in the world of work. The competent use of oral language is a natural aspect of lifelong learning skills developed in schools.

To ensure that oral language occupies a central position in the classroom, its use must be planned and directed. When given status, support, and value, oral language can turn a classroom into a vibrant, interactive environment for learners.

Oral communication is the verbal and nonverbal interaction with an audience to communicate thoughts, information, and feelings. Listening and speaking are important means by which human beings make connections with each other. To speak fluently and confidently in a variety of situations and to understand the words of others are human needs and important goals of education.

Listening and Speaking Foundational Objectives

Foundational objectives direct teachers to the most important understandings and abilities to be developed in a particular subject area such as English language arts. They also provide guidance for unit planning.

Grade 5

Students will demonstrate increasing:

- *confidence and competence in using oral language to generate, clarify and extend their understandings of what they observe, feel, hear and read through personal reflection and interaction with others;*
- *ability to communicate ideas orally and in writing to a variety of peer, adult and group audiences with confidence, sensitivity, fluency and clarity;*
- *ability and confidence to adapt oral and written language for various settings and purposes, and the needs of their audiences;*
- *respect for the ideas, language and communication styles of others and ability to respond sensitively and thoughtfully; and,*
- *ability and confidence to convey ideas using various media* (Saskatchewan Education. (1992). *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level*. Regina, SK).

Grade 8

Speaking *– Students will extend their abilities to:*

- *recognize that talk is an important tool for communicating, thinking and learning;*
- *practise the behaviours of effective speakers; and,*
- *speak fluently in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes and audiences.*

Listening *– Students will extend their abilities to:*

- *recognize that listening is an active, constructive process;*
- *practise the behaviours of effective, active listeners; and,*
- *listen effectively in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes* (Saskatchewan Education. (1997). *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Middle Level (Grades 6-9)*. Regina, SK).

Grade 11

Speaking *– Students will:*

- *recognize that talk is an important tool for communicating, thinking and learning;*
- *practise the behaviours of effective speakers; and,*
- *speak fluently and confidently in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes and audiences.*

Listening *– Students will:*

- *recognize listening as an active, constructive process;*
- *practise the behaviours of effective listeners; and,*
- *listen effectively in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes* (Saskatchewan Education. (1993). English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Secondary Level. Regina, SK).

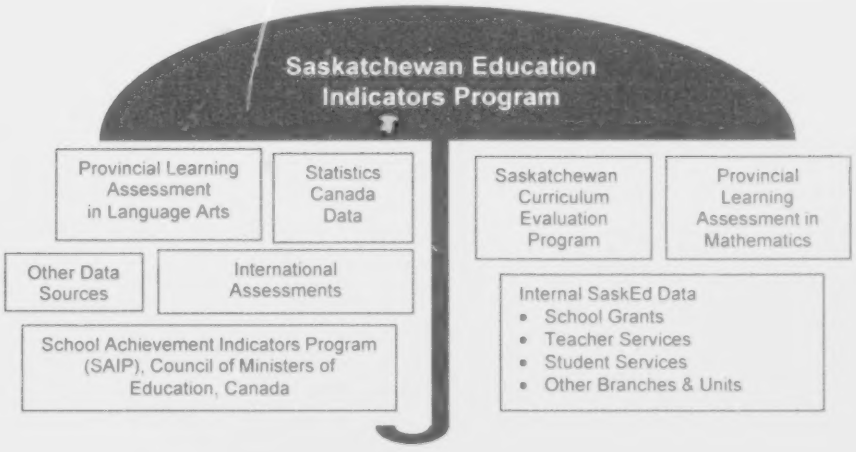
THE 1998 PROVINCIAL LEARNING ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (LISTENING AND SPEAKING)

The 1998 Provincial Learning Assessment in English Language Arts (Listening and Speaking) was the third provincial learning assessment that examined Saskatchewan students' language arts performance. The first two, in 1996 and 1994, focused on reading and writing. The 1998 language arts learning assessment was the first to focus on Grades 5, 8 and 11 student opportunities and outcomes in listening and speaking.

The provincial learning assessments in specific subject or skill areas are one source of information for the Saskatchewan Education Indicators Program. The Indicators Program draws data from many other sources to create a comprehensive picture of Saskatchewan's Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system. Some of these sources are illustrated in Figure 1.

Saskatchewan students' reading and writing performance was also assessed in 1998. Saskatchewan participated with the other provinces and territories in the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) Reading and Writing Assessment. The SAIP assessment, developed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) was administered to about 2,000 13- and 16-year old Saskatchewan students. The findings of this assessment are reported in the *School Achievement Indicators Program Reading and Writing Report, 1998.*

Figure 1: Saskatchewan Education Indicators Program


Saskatchewan Education Indicators Program
Provincial Learning Assessment in Language Arts
Statistics Canada Data
Other Data Sources
International Assessments
School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP), Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
Saskatchewan Curriculum Evaluation Program
Provincial Learning Assessment in Mathematics
Internal SaskEd Data
• School Grants
• Teacher Services
• Student Services
• Other Branches & Units

OBJECTIVES OF THE 1998 ASSESSMENT

The objectives of the 1998 Provincial Learning Assessment in English Language Arts (Listening and Speaking) were to:

- report to the people of Saskatchewan on students' listening and speaking skills;
- establish baseline data about students' achievement so that students' listening and speaking performance in future years can be compared; and,
- collect information about the home and school environments contributing to students' opportunities to learn listening and speaking skills.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

A total of 1,967 students in 87 Saskatchewan classrooms participated in the listening and speaking assessment. These classrooms were selected at random from all schools with Grade 5, 8 and 11 students. The participating classrooms represented urban, rural and northern schools of varying sizes.

Students enrolled in regular English language arts courses participated. Students in modified programs where the foundational objectives of the course were altered did not participate. Non-participants included students in resource room programs, English 21, International Baccalaureate (I.B.) programs and locally-developed courses. Detailed information about the students who participated in the assessment appears in Appendix B.

Students were asked to do their best, in order to show how well Saskatchewan students listen and speak. Students' effort depended on their personal motivation, as work done in this assessment did not affect individual marks.

All information collected focused on listening and speaking only, not on reading and writing. Information is reported on a provincial level only. No information is available for individual students, classrooms, schools or school divisions.

FORMAT OF THE ASSESSMENT

Students completed four test components.

Part 1 – Students viewed a short video clip and then answered 15 multiple-choice questions about it. The multiple-choice test was in written form, and the questions were read aloud to the students.

The same video clip, "It's Who I Am," was used for both Grades 5 and 8. Chuck, a boy in his mid-teens, is asked by Danny to steal an exam from a teacher's classroom. Chuck wants to be popular with Danny and his friends. There is an implied promise that Chuck will get his wish if he steals the exam. Ray, Chuck's friend, tries to persuade him not to steal the exam.

The video clip for Grade 11 was "Cat Lovers Change a Car Ad". It explains that many people wrote and phoned the Mazda company, complaining about an ad for Mazda cars that described them as large enough to swing a cat in and showed a driver trying to run over a cat. As a result of all the negative public comments, the ad was changed.

Part 2 – Students were given an assignment in both oral and written form. They participated in a group discussion to develop a group response and plan a two- to four-minute presentation describing their response to the assignment. The student test booklet and oral directions provided instructions for this part of the test. These instructions included some preparatory questions, a planning chart, and a checklist for group discussion and presentation.

Group Discussion and Group Presentation Assignments for the three grades were:

Grade 5 – Heroes and Heroines

Heroes and heroines possess many different characteristics. Name three to five characteristics your group believes all heroic people should possess. Give reasons why you think these characteristics are important. As examples, you may wish to use:

- *your friends*
- *a member of your family*
- *people in books*
- *people in movies or television*
- *people in your community*

Part 3 – Each group of students delivered a two- to four-minute presentation in their classrooms outlining their solution to the problem they were given.

Part 4 – Students then completed:

- a self-evaluation form to assess their individual work in the group;
- a group-evaluation form to assess how well the group worked together; and,
- a *Student Questionnaire* about their listening and speaking practices and attitudes.

Teachers completed a *Teacher Questionnaire* that asked them to describe each of the following in regard to listening and speaking:

- their instructional practices;
- their personal beliefs and attitudes about listening and speaking; and,
- their students' behaviours.

Grade 8 – Decision-making

You are to select one topic that interests you.

- *You and your friends found a wallet containing $100. When no one claimed the money, the police returned it. What will you and your friends do with the money? Create a list of at least three possible choices. Name an advantage and a disadvantage for each of your choices. Which of the three possible solutions would your group choose? Explain why. OR*

- *You received an invitation to a party and your best friend did not. You were told not to tell your friend about your invitation. What will you do? Create a list of three possible choices. Name an advantage and a disadvantage for each. Which of the three possible solutions would your group choose? Explain why.*

Grade 11 – Thought-provoking Issues

There are many thought-provoking issues in our society that deserve attention. Consider the following school scenario:

It's 3:30 on a Friday afternoon. You are at your locker placing your homework in your bag. You remember the discussion held in your last class about career plans. As you walk down the hall, you overhear two students talking about a pregnant classmate. You pass the display case housing the school's trophies, and then pause at the bulletin board, noticing that the poster for the SRC speaker on AIDS is adjacent to the poster advertising next week's school dance. Outside, you slide behind the wheel of the car and pop a tape of your favourite group into the deck. A friend pulls up beside you and wags a can of beer in your direction. You suddenly remember you must pick up yearbook pictures from the photo shop. Arriving at the shop, you discover the photos aren't ready as promised. You inquire about a pick-up date and the proprietor is very abrupt, turning quickly to serve an older customer. Later, as you pull into the driveway, Mom is just arriving home from work, and together, you are greeted at the door with the wonderful aroma of Leslie's stew.

Your group is to select one thought-provoking issue you care about from the school scenario or from society today, and create a message that will enhance public awareness of the issue.

Teachers administered the assessment in their classrooms between May 1 and May 22, 1998. The total time required of each participating student was 3.5 to 4 hours.

More information about the format of the assessment appears in Appendix A.

Participating teachers were trained in a two-day orientation session to administer the assessment and to evaluate student performance.

SCORING OF THE ASSESSMENT

Classroom teachers rated students' performance on six dimensions during the group discussion and group presentation.

During the group discussion, teachers rated each group's performance for:

- participation;
- active listening; and,
- respect for conversational peers.

During the group presentation, teachers rated each group's performance for:

- content;
- language; and,
- presentation/delivery style.

Teachers rated performance from Levels 1 to 4 to describe the quality of each group's performance in each of the six dimensions. Level 1 represented the lowest level of performance and Level 4 the highest.

Prior to the assessment, teachers were trained to score consistently, using scoring criteria (rubrics) and videotaped examples of students working in groups. The scoring criteria describe each of the four performance levels, and appear in Appendix E.

Group scores, the multiple-choice test, and questionnaires were computer-analyzed.

STANDARD-SETTING

Teachers, parents, educational administrators, trustees, faculty from post-secondary educational institutions, representatives of the Indian and Métis community, and members of the business community met to set provincial standards for opportunity to learn and for student performance.

The 26 people on the standard-setting panel represented several stakeholder groups, in order to reflect the varying perspectives of these groups.

Standard-setting helps to put students' opportunities to learn and their performance into a context. Often when given results on a test, it is difficult to say whether these results represent good, average or weak performance without reference to some standard. In order to provide this reference, the standard-setting panel met to examine the tests, discuss students' opportunities to learn and performance, and to determine the percentage of students who should have specific opportunities to learn and demonstrate particular levels of student performance.

Further information about standard-setting for student opportunities to learn and student outcomes appear in the sections that follow. Standard-setting activity within this assessment is summarized in Appendix F.

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN RELATED TO LISTENING AND SPEAKING

WHAT IS OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN?

Opportunity to learn refers to the conditions or process of learning.

Outcomes describe the products or results of learning such as skill levels demonstrated by students.

Student achievement depends not only on students' ability, but also on the social, economic and educational factors that facilitate learning. Differences in students' educational experiences, personal circumstances and family support contribute to their opportunity to learn. Some of the factors that influence opportunity to learn include:

- good instruction;
- safe and secure school environments;
- school policies that ensure non-discrimination;
- access to and time spent using good books, videos and other instructional resources;
- adequate nutrition, enough rest and good health;
- family support and encouragement; and,
- access to and time spent using technology.

The 1998 Provincial Learning Assessment in English Language Arts (Listening and Speaking) examined opportunity to learn in terms of shared responsibility. Students' opportunities to learn are affected by instructional practice in the classroom, student readiness and commitment to learn, and parental support for student learning.

The classroom-related opportunities investigated were teachers providing:

- small-group work in language arts class;
- guides, models, and scaffolds for developing good speaking skills; and,
- guides, models, and scaffolds for developing good listening skills.

The student readiness-related opportunities investigated were:

- student persistence and quality of work;
- student reflective practices to improve their learning in language arts; and,
- student time spent doing language arts homework.

The parental support-related opportunities investigated were:

- parental encouragement for students to express their opinions and ideas;
- parental encouragement to involve students in family discussions; and,
- students' satisfaction with their parents' support for their learning.

Teacher Questionnaire data were used to indicate classroom-related opportunities to learn. *Student Questionnaire* data were used to indicate student readiness- and parental support-related opportunities to learn.

STANDARD-SETTING FOR OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN

Independent standard-setting panels considered the nine opportunity-to-learn elements for each grade.

For four elements, the standard stated the minimum number of times per week that:

- students work in small groups in language arts class;
- teachers provide guides, models and scaffolds for developing good speaking skills;
- teachers provide guides, models and scaffolds for developing good listening skills; and,
- students reflect upon their work in language arts.

For one element, the standard stated the expected number of hours per week that:

- students spend on language arts homework.

After setting the frequency or quantity standards for an opportunity-to-learn element, the standard-setting panels established provincial expectations for the percentages of Saskatchewan students who should have opportunity consistent with the standard.

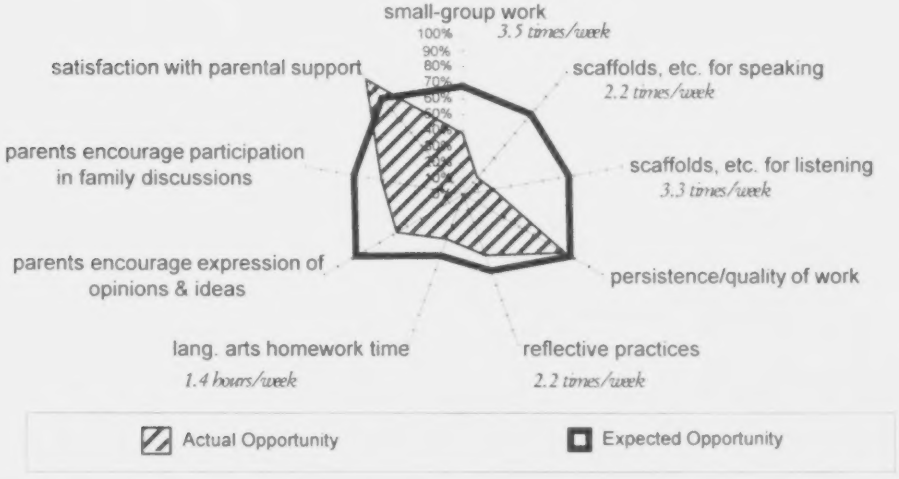
For the four remaining elements, the standard stated the expected percentage of students:

- who persist to do their best work in language arts;
- whose parents encourage expression of opinions and ideas;
- whose parents encourage participation in family discussions; and,
- who are satisfied with the level of parental support for their learning.

OVERVIEW OF SASKATCHEWAN STUDENTS' OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN

Opportunity-to-learn results for Grades 5, 8 and 11 appear in Figures 2, 3 and 4.

Figure 2: Grade 5 Students' Opportunity to Learn



Interpreting Radar Graphs

- *Each of the nine opportunity-to-learn elements is placed along an axis.*
- *The percentage expectation for an element is where the dark boundary line intersects the axis.*
- *Teacher- and student-reported opportunities are represented by the shaded region.*
- *Actual opportunities fall short of expectations if there is any white area along an axis inside the dark boundary line.*
- *Actual opportunities exceed expectations if the shaded region extends along any axis beyond the dark boundary line.*

Figure 3: Grade 8 Students' Opportunity to Learn

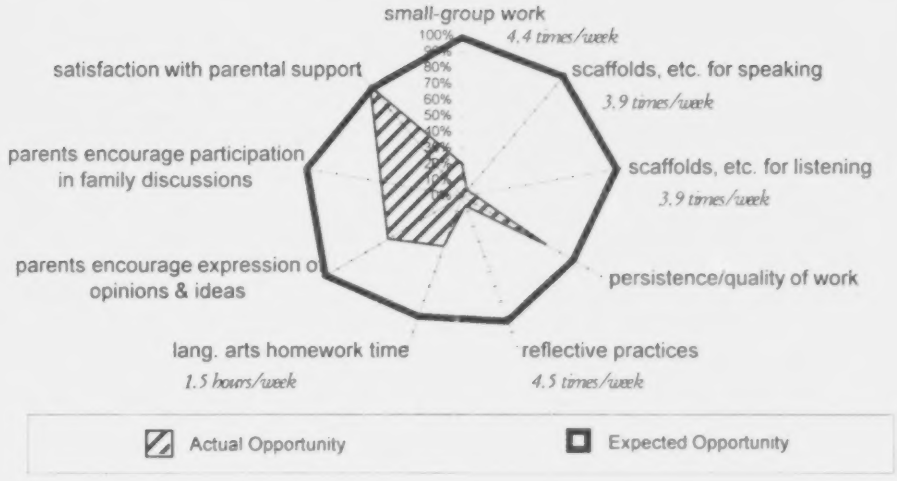
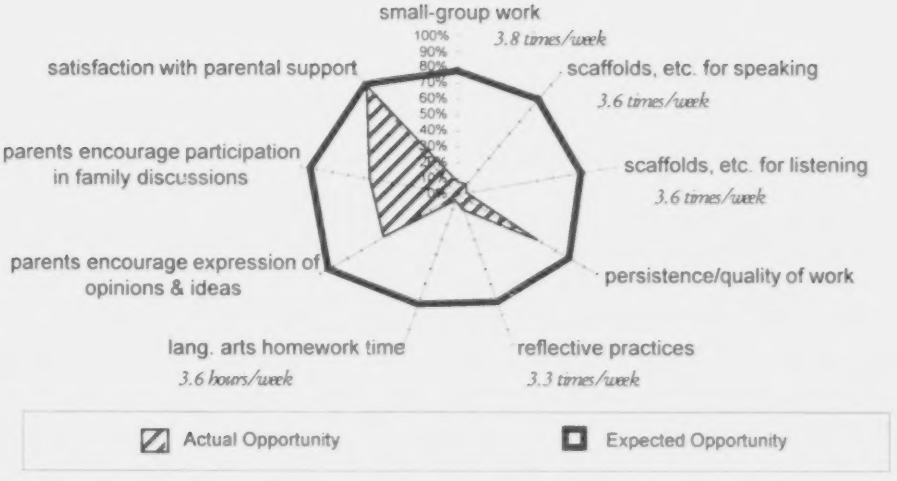


Figure 4: Grade 11 Students' Opportunity to Learn



Figures 2, 3 and 4 show that:

- Saskatchewan students were satisfied with their parents' support for their learning.
- In other areas, students' opportunities to learn fell below provincial expectations.
- In general, the gap between results and expectations was smaller for Grade 5 than for the other two grades.
- The expectations set by the standard-setting panel for all aspects of opportunity to learn for Grade 8 were higher than those for the other two grades.
- Fewer teachers than expected provided opportunities for students to learn in small groups, or provided models, guides and scaffolds for listening and speaking skills as frequently as suggested by the standard.
- Few students, particularly at Grades 8 and 11, spent as much time on language arts homework as the standard-setting panel thought they should. Nor did they reflect on their work as frequently as expected. A larger percentage persisted and did their best work, although this number was still short of provincial expectations for Grades 8 and 11.
- Although most students were satisfied with their parents' support for their learning, fewer students than expected were encouraged by their parents to express opinions and ideas, and to participate in family discussions.

Students' opportunities to learn were below expectations in all elements of opportunity to learn, except for students' satisfaction with their parents' support for learning.

CLASSROOM-RELATED OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN

Students' school experiences play a major role in their learning. The curriculum, instructional methods, number and type of instructional resources, and school environment all affect educational achievement.

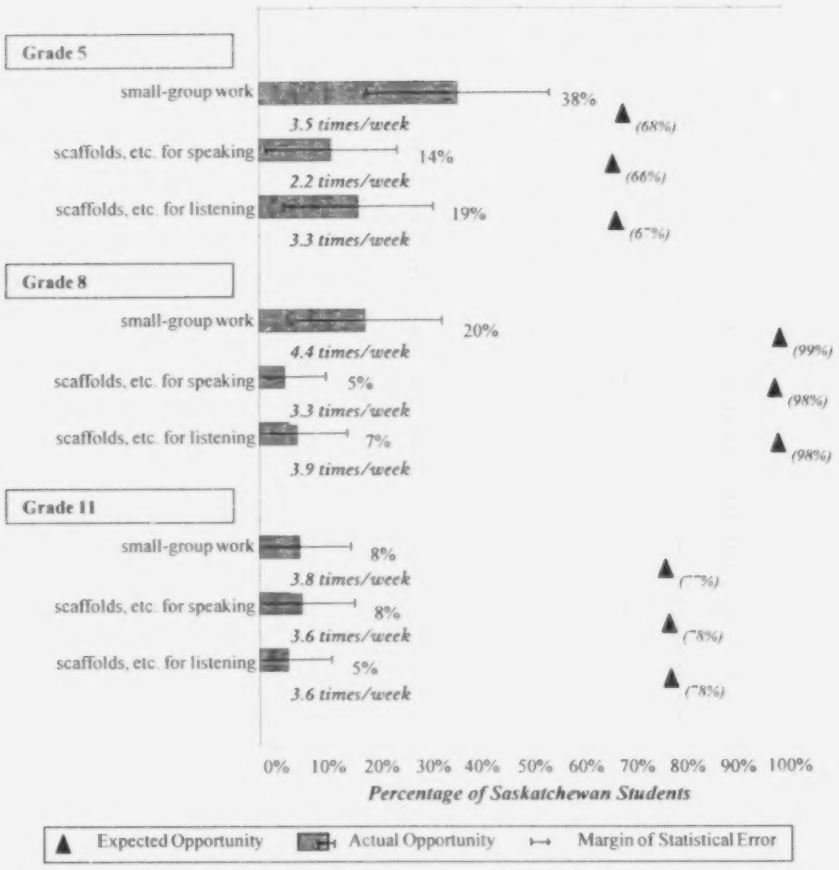
Classroom-related opportunities assessed were teachers providing:

- small-group work in language arts class;
- guides, models and scaffolds for developing good speaking skills, and,
- guides, models and scaffolds for developing good listening skills.

For all grades, students had insufficient opportunities to work in small groups. They also had fewer experiences than expected with guides, models and scaffolds for developing listening and speaking skills.

Figure 5 shows students' classroom-related opportunities to learn across the three grades.

Figure 5: Classroom-Related Opportunities to Learn, Expected and Actual Results



Interpreting Bar Graphs

The results of tests and surveys depend on whether the sample of students tested fairly represents the skills and opportunities to learn of all Saskatchewan students. A sample of different students may yield different results. The ⊢⊣ at the end of each bar indicates with 95 percent certainty that a similarly-selected sample would have results within that range.

- *If the ⊢⊣ overlaps the standards triangle (▲), then the results **met** the standard.*
- *If the entire ⊢⊣ extends beyond the end of the standards triangle (▲), then results **exceeded** the standard.*
- *If the entire ⊢⊣ falls short of the standards triangle (▲), then results **have not met** the standard.*

For Figure 5, all of the lines (⊢⊣) indicating statistical error fall short of the standards triangles, indicating that all classroom-related opportunities to learn fell short of the standards.

Small-Group Work

Developing good listening and speaking skills takes practice. Small-group work is an effective way of providing that practice. In a small group, students have more opportunities to contribute. They speak, listen, and receive feedback more frequently than would be possible with whole-class instruction.

Figure 5 shows that:

- Saskatchewan students had fewer opportunities to work in small groups than the standard-setters considered desirable.
- Standard-setters expected Grade 8 students to work in small groups more frequently than Grade 5 and 11 students.

- The percentage of teachers providing small-group activity as frequently as expected decreased at higher grades.

- The gap between expected and actual opportunities was smaller for Grade 5 than for other grades.

Students and teachers both reported on the number of times per week students work in small groups. Their responses appear in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Frequency of Small-Group Work in Language Arts in a Regular Week, Students' and Teachers' Perceptions

	Grade 5		Grade 8		Grade 11	
	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers
Never	20%	7%	20%	3%	18%	10%
Once	33%	10%	38%	31%	44%	38%
Twice	18%	31%	21%	24%	23%	31%
Three times	10%	28%	11%	17%	9%	17%
Four times	6%	3%	2%	10%	2%	3%
Five times	11%	21%	4%	14%	1%	0%

Note: Percentages may not total exactly 100 percent due to missing responses and rounding.

Figure 6 shows that:

- Four of every five students in each of Grades 5, 8 and 11 worked in small groups at least once per week. Over 90 percent of teachers reported providing small-group work sometimes.

- One-half of Grade 5 teachers, 40 percent of Grade 8 teachers and 20 percent of Grade 11 teachers had students work in groups three or more times per week.

- Students reported participating in small-group activity less frequently than teachers reported providing it.

Guides, Models and Scaffolds for Developing Listening and Speaking Skills

Guides, models and scaffolds provide structures or patterns that students can use as models for their own listening and speaking practices. These guides can be presented through class discussion, video, audiotape or in written formats.

They include various types of checklists that students can use to structure their listening or speaking. For example, a listening guide for a formal presentation might include points such as "speaker's purpose, main ideas presented, and personal reactions to presentation."

Guides, models and scaffolds for developing speaking skills include activities such as:

- discussing with students the criteria for a variety of formal and informal speaking formats. For example, the format for a conversation permits both people to speak alternately, and assumes that each person's comments relate to the general theme of the conversation.
- modeling a variety of formal and informal speaking formats for students. For example, the teacher might play a video of a short formal speech and then ask students to identify the introduction, body and conclusion of the speech. Students may give additional support or evidence the speaker could have used.

Figure 5 shows that:

- For all grades, students had fewer experiences with guides, models and scaffolds for developing listening and speaking skills than standard-setters thought they should.
- The gap between expected and actual opportunities to use guides, models and scaffolds for developing listening and speaking skills was smaller at Grade 5 than at the other two grades.

STUDENT-RELATED OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN

Students' ability influences their achievement, but so do other student characteristics such as persistence, reflection, and amount and type of homework.

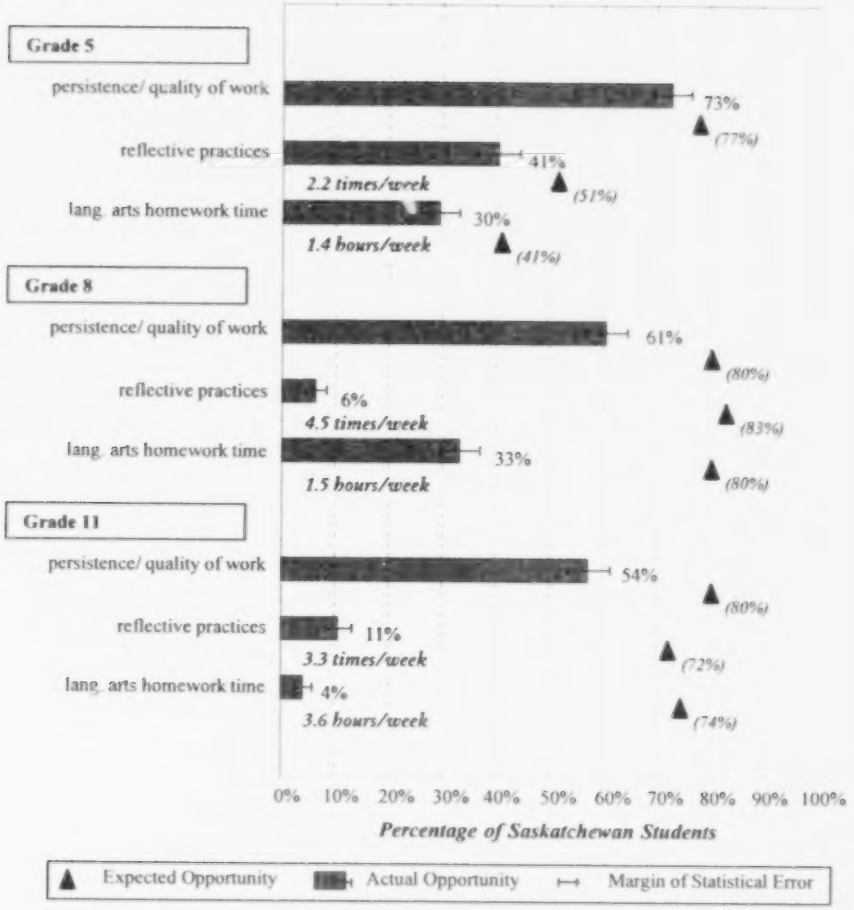
Student readiness-related opportunities assessed were:

- student persistence and quality of work;
- student reflective practices to improve their learning in language arts; and,
- student time spent doing language arts homework.

Figure 7 illustrates student-related opportunities to learn across the three grades.

- **The percentage of students showing acceptable persistence and quality of work was near expectations for Grade 5 and below expectations for Grades 8 and 11.**
- **For all three grades, students spent less time on language arts homework than expected and did not reflect on their work as often as expected.**

Figure 7: Student-Related Opportunities to Learn, Expected and Actual Results



Persistence and Quality of Work

Persistence refers to a student's ability to stick with a task until the task is completed and the student feels that it reflects his or her very best work.

Figure 7 shows that:

- At Grade 5, the percentage of students who showed acceptable persistence and quality of work was close to the provincial standard.
- Fewer Grade 8 and 11 students than expected showed acceptable persistence and quality of work.
- The percentage of students with acceptable persistence and quality of work was less at higher grades than at lower grades.

Reflecting Upon Work Done

Reflecting upon past work gives students an important opportunity to learn. Reflection helps students recognize the strengths in their performance and set goals for improvement.

> **The Importance of Reflection**
>
> *Following speaking experiences, both formal and informal, it is important to have students reflect upon their performance. Their reflection, whether it is oral or written, should include the teacher, who can help them set personal goals for improving their speaking abilities. This type of reflective assessment and goal setting encourages critical thought* (Saskatchewan Education (1997). *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Middle Level (Grades 6-9)*. Regina, SK).

Figure 7 shows that:

- Students reflected less upon their work than the standard-setters thought they should.
- The gap between actual amount of reflection and expected amount was less at Grade 5 than at the other two grades.

Student Questionnaire data also indicated that:

- Twenty-five percent of Grade 5 students, 30 percent of Grade 8 students, and 33 percent of Grade 11 students never paused to think about what they have done in language arts and on ways they could improve their work.
- Younger students reflected on their work more frequently than older students.
- Females reflected on their work more than males. This gender difference was larger for older students than for younger ones.

Homework

Well-designed homework activities can reinforce and enrich students' classroom learning. The amount of time spent on homework is one indication of students' commitment to learning.

Figure 7 shows that:

- The standard-setters felt that older students should spend 3.6 hours per week on language arts homework, significantly more than the 1.5 hours per week expected of younger students.
- The gap between amount of homework expected and amount actually done was greater at Grade 11 than at the other two grades.
- At all three grades, students did less homework than the standard-setters expected.

Figure 8 compares the amount of time that students said they spend on homework to their teachers' expectations.

	Grade 5		Grade 8		Grade 11	
	Student Response	Teacher Response	Student Response	Teacher Response	Student Response	Teacher Response
No time	14%	3%	10%	4%	11%	0%
Some time but less than one hour	45%	45%	40%	18%	37%	24%
1 to 2 hours	27%	45%	28%	61%	29%	38%
2 to 3 hours	5%	3%	10%	11%	13%	21%
3 to 4 hours	3%	0%	4%	7%	5%	17%
More than 4 hours	3%	3%	4%	0%	2%	0%

Note: Percentages may not total exactly 100 percent due to missing responses and rounding.

"Student Response" refers to the percentage of students who spend the indicated time doing language arts homework.

"Teacher Response" refers to the percentage of teachers who expect their students to spend the indicated time doing language arts homework.

Figure 8 shows that:

- Students spent less time doing language arts homework than their teachers thought they should. This was the case at all grade levels.
- While teacher expectations for amount of time spent on language arts homework were greater at the higher grades, the actual amount of time spent by students was similar in the three grades.

Student Questionnaire data also showed that female students do more homework than male students.

PARENTAL SUPPORT-RELATED OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN

Parental support and encouragement are very important to students' success in school. Children whose parents are interested in their school activities and encourage them to do their best are more likely to be successful in school than are children who lack this kind of support.

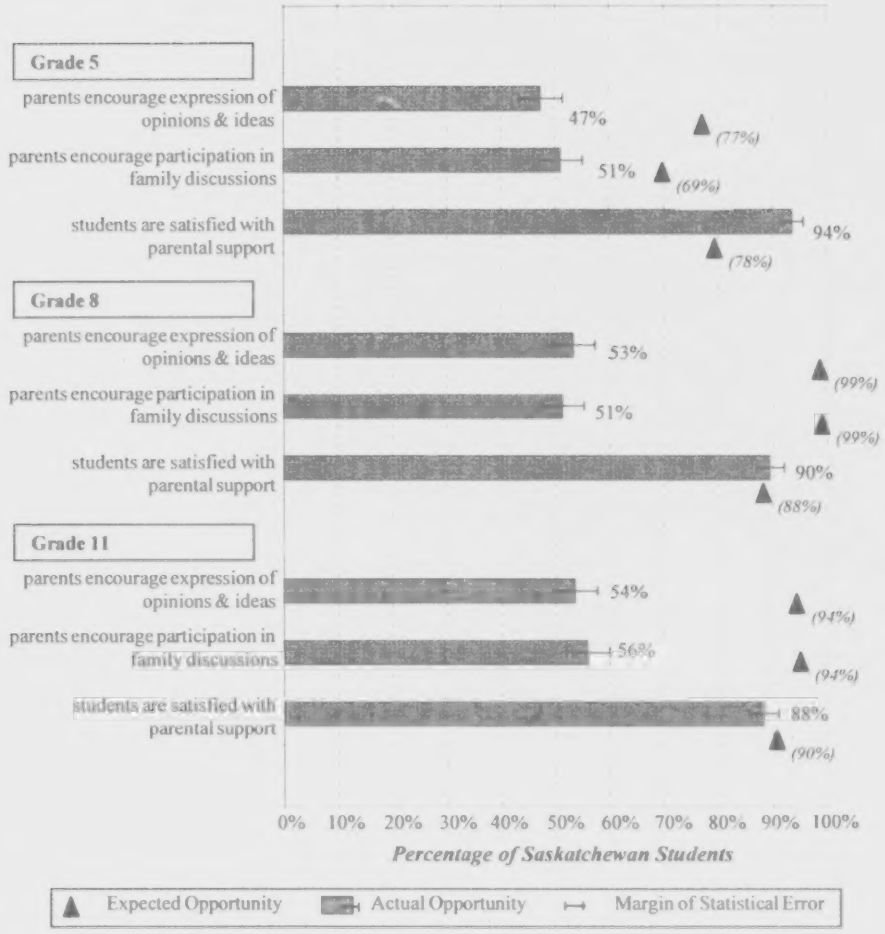
- **Saskatchewan students are satisfied with their parents' support for their learning.**
- **Fewer students than expected said their parents encourage them to express their ideas and opinions, and to participate in family discussions.**

Parental support-related opportunities assessed were:

- parental encouragement for students to express their opinions and ideas;
- parental encouragement to involve students in family discussions; and,
- students' satisfaction with their parents' support for their learning.

Figure 9 illustrates parental support-related opportunities to learn across the three grades.

Figure 9: Parental Support-Related Opportunities to Learn, Expected and Actual Results



Parental Encouragement for Students to Express Their Ideas and Opinions

When parents encourage children and adolescents to express their ideas and opinions, youth feel that their views are valuable and worthwhile. As well, they gain valuable practice at translating thoughts into spoken words.

Figure 9 shows that:

- About half the students at all three grades said their parents encourage them to express their ideas and opinions.
- This percentage was below provincial expectations, which ranged from 77 percent at Grade 5 to nearly 100 percent at Grades 8 and 11.

Parental Encouragement for Students to Participate in Family Discussions

Family discussions serve several purposes. They give students useful experience listening and speaking. They help students understand others' perspectives and they make students feel their comments are valued.

Figure 9 shows that:

- For all grades, the percentages of students who said their parents encourage them to participate in family discussions were below expectations.
- Standard-setters expected more Grade 8 and 11 students than Grade 5 students to be encouraged by their parents to participate in family discussions. This didn't prove to be the case. Instead, similar numbers (about half) at each grade said their parents encourage them to participate in family discussions.

Students' Satisfaction with the Support Their Parents Provide for Learning

There is a strong relationship between parental support for learning and students' achievement in school. Parental support includes elements such as expressing pride in the child's achievements, encouraging the child to do her or his best, and emphasizing the importance of education.

Figure 9 shows that:

- About 90 percent of students at each grade reported satisfaction with their parents' support for their learning, meeting or exceeding provincial expectations.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

WHAT WAS ASSESSED?

The oral language skills of students were assessed in a social or group context. Listening and speaking were considered as an integrated and interactive act of communication in a regular classroom setting.

Six dimensions of student achievement were measured in small-group discussions and presentations.

During the group discussion, teachers rated each group's performance for:

- participation;
- active listening; and,
- respect for conversational peers.

During the group presentation, teachers rated each group's performance for:

- content;
- language; and,
- presentation/delivery style.

STANDARD-SETTING FOR STUDENT OUTCOMES

Criteria were established for four levels of student achievement; Level 4 is the highest level of achievement and Level 1 is the lowest. Levels 2-4 were considered to be adequate performance. The detailed scoring criteria appear in Appendix E.

The standard-setting panel identified the percentage of students at each grade expected to attain each level of achievement for the six dimensions assessed.

Achievement Levels

- *Level 4 achievement is insightful, perceptive, powerful.*
- *Level 3 achievement is thoughtful, focused, aware.*
- *Level 2 achievement is mechanical, adequate, conventional.*
- *Level 1 achievement is weak, sporadic, inconsistent.*

OVERVIEW OF SASKATCHEWAN STUDENT OUTCOMES

Student achievement results for Grades 5, 8 and 11 are summarized in Figures 10, 11 and 12. These figures show the percentage of students who achieved Levels 2-4 (adequate performance) in each of the six dimensions.

Figure 10: Grade 5 Listening and Speaking Adequate Achievement (Levels 2-4), Expected and Actual Results

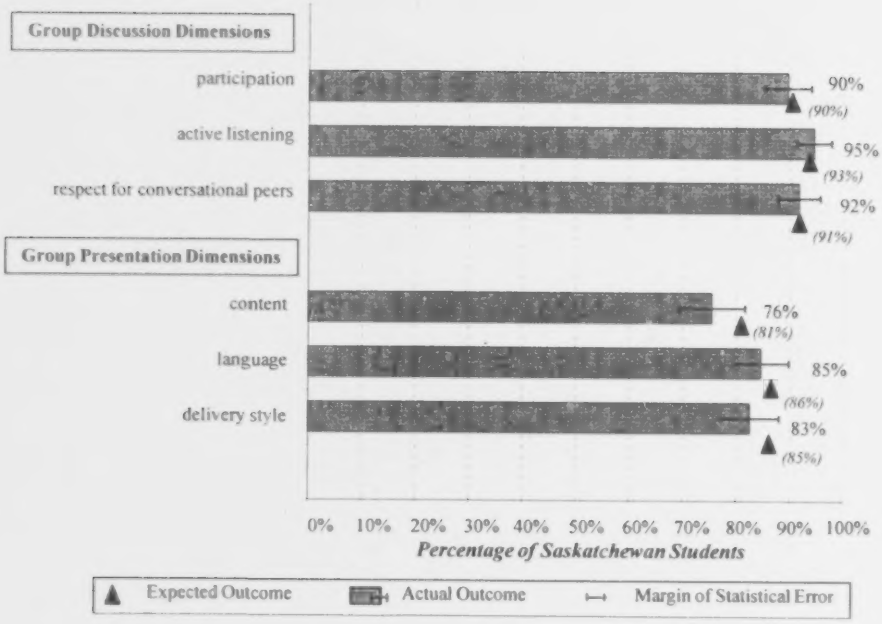


Figure 11: Grade 8 Listening and Speaking Adequate Achievement (Levels 2-4), Expected and Actual Results

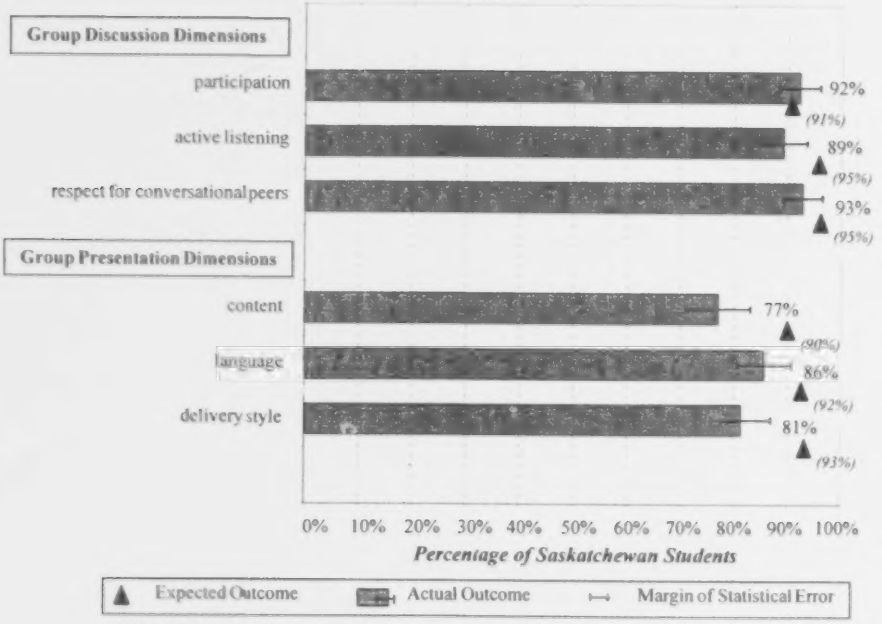
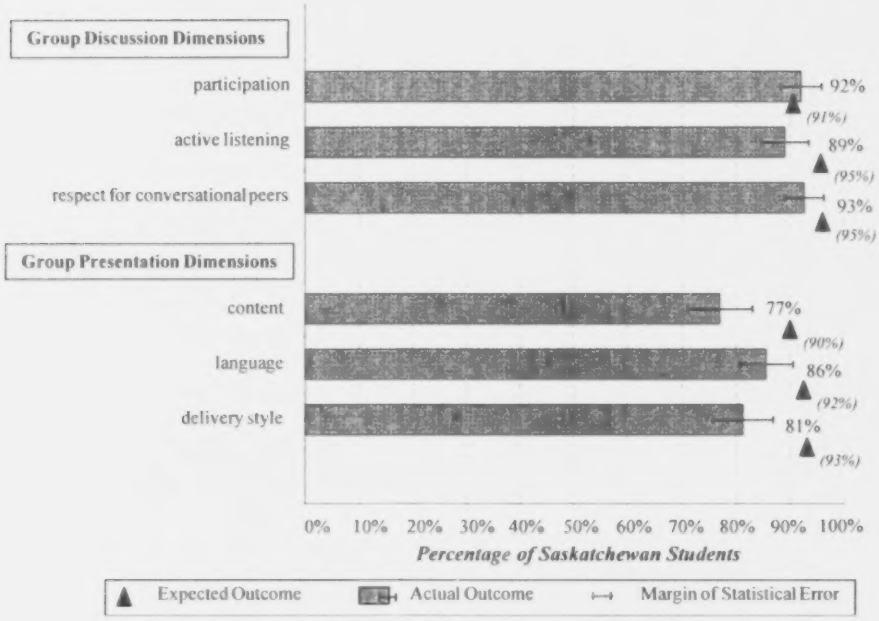


Figure 12: Grade 11 Listening and Speaking Adequate Achievement (Levels 2-4), Expected and Actual Results



Figures 10, 11 and 12 show that:

- For all three grades, student achievement was adequate for participation in group discussion and respect for conversational peers during group discussion.
- Grade 5 and 11 students demonstrated adequate performance for active listening during group discussion, content in group presentation and language in group presentations. Grade 8 students achieved below expectation in these areas.
- The percentage of students demonstrating adequate delivery style during group presentations met expectations at Grade 5 and fell short of expectations at Grades 8 and 11.

GROUP DISCUSSION RESULTS

Participation in Group Discussion

Being able to participate effectively in a group discussion is a key skill for both job and personal success. Most jobs require discussion of work plans and goals with colleagues. The ability to share ideas, make plans and resolve differences with friends and family helps build strong relationships.

For all three grades, the percentage of students who participated adequately in group discussion met expectations.

When assessing students' participation in group discussion, teachers asked themselves questions such as, "Did comments advance and stimulate discussion? Was an effective approach used to organize and complete the assignment? Did members work politely and harmoniously together? Was clear, precise language used?"

The performance of Grade 5, 8 and 11 students for participation in group discussion is displayed in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Participation in Group Discussion, Expected and Actual Outcomes, by Grade

	Grade 5		Grade 8		Grade 11	
Level	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**
Level 4	10%	11.4% •	16%	14.0% •	19%	15.6% •
Level 3	42%	38.6% •	54%	37.8% ▼	46%	43.3% •
Level 2	38%	39.7% •	21%	40.4% ▲	30%	36.1% •
Level 1	10%	10.3% •	9%	7.8% •	5%	5.0% •
Levels 2-4	90%	89.7% •	91%	92.2% •	95%	95.0% •

Note: Percentages show the proportion of students who should have reached and actually did reach the indicated performance level(s).

▲ indicates actual outcomes **exceeded** expectations.
• indicates actual outcomes **met** expectations.
▼ indicates actual outcomes **were below** expectations.

Figure 13 shows that:

- For all three grades, at least 90 percent of students achieved adequately (Levels 2-4). This was consistent with the standard-setters' expectations.
- Grade 5 and 11 students met the standards for each of the four performance levels.
- Among Grade 8 students, fewer students than expected achieved Level 3 and more achieved Level 2.
- Older students were more skilled at participation in group discussion than younger students.

Active Listening in Group Discussion

Active listening skills contribute to accuracy and effectiveness in all job and social situations. Good listeners are attentive to both the meaning and the emotional content of a speaker's words. Listening in a group situation also requires that listeners analyze differences and similarities among the various speakers' points of view.

For Grades 5 and 11, the percentages of students who demonstrated adequate active listening skills during group discussion were consistent with expectations. For Grade 8, the percentage was below expectations.

When assessing students' ability to listen actively in group discussion, teachers asked themselves questions such as, "Did students paraphrase others' comments? Did they ask probing questions of others? Were comments of others acknowledged and built upon? Were gestures and body language used effectively?"

The performance of Grade 5, 8 and 11 students for active listening in group discussion is illustrated in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Active Listening in Group Discussion, Expected and Actual Outcomes, by Grade

	Grade 5		Grade 8		Grade 11	
Level	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**
Level 4	11%	12.0% •	17%	15.5% •	22%	21.1% •
Level 3	44%	43.5% •	52%	37.6% ▼	50%	45.6% •
Level 2	38%	39.1% •	26%	36.1% ▲	24%	28.3% •
Level 1	7%	5.4% •	5%	10.3% ▲	4%	5.0% •
Levels 2-4	93%	94.6% •	95%	89.2% ▼	96%	95.0% •

Note: Percentages show the proportion of students who should have reached and actually did reach the indicated performance level(s).

▲ indicates actual outcomes **exceeded** expectations.
• indicates actual outcomes **met** expectations.
▼ indicates actual outcomes **were below** expectations.

Figure 14 shows that:

- For Grades 5 and 11, the percentages of students showing adequate active listening skills during group discussion (Levels 2-4) were consistent with provincial expectations. At Grade 8, the percentage of students who performed adequately was below expectations.
- Grade 5 and 11 students met the standards for each of the four performance levels.
- More Grade 8 students than expected were at Level 2 and fewer were at Level 3.
- Students' skill in active listening dipped at Grade 8. The percentage of students achieving adequately (Levels 2-4) was about the same at Grades 5 and 11, but less at Grade 8.

Respect for Conversational Peers in Group Discussion

In all three grades, the percentage of students who demonstrated adequate respect for conversational peers during group discussion met expectations.

Respect for others during conversation is important for both a happy family life and job effectiveness. Employers expect that their employees will be respectful of co-workers, customers and clients.

When assessing students' respect for their peers during group discussion, teachers asked themselves questions such as, "Were ideas and opinions of others acknowledged? Did all group members express their opinions confidently? Were diverse opinions expected and sought out? Did students try to understand differing opinions and pursue areas of common understanding?"

The performance of Grade 5, 8 and 11 students in respect for conversational peers during group discussion is illustrated in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Respect for Conversational Peers in Group Discussion, Expected and Actual Outcomes, by Grade

	Grade 5		Grade 8		Grade 11	
Level	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**
Level 4	18%	16.8% •	18%	19.7% •	28%	22.2% •
Level 3	45%	41.3% •	53%	45.1% ▼	45%	58.9% ▲
Level 2	28%	33.7% •	24%	28.0% •	24%	17.2% ▼
Level 1	9%	8.2% •	5%	7.3% •	3%	1.7% •
Levels 2-4	90%	90.8% •	95%	92.8% •	97%	98.3% •

Note: Percentages show the proportion of students who should have reached and actually did reach the indicated performance level(s).

▲ indicates actual outcomes **exceeded** expectations.
• indicates actual outcomes **met** expectations.
▼ indicates actual outcomes **were below** expectations.

Figure 15 shows that:

- At all three grades, more than 90 percent of students achieved adequately (Levels 2-4) in their respect for conversational peers during group discussion. This result was consistent with provincial expectations.
- Grade 5 students met expectations for each of the four performance levels.
- Fewer Grade 8 students than expected achieved at Level 3.
- Fewer Grade 11 students than anticipated achieved at Level 3 and more achieved at Level 2.
- In general, students' respect for their conversational peers was greater at higher grades than at lower grades.

GROUP PRESENTATION RESULTS

Content in Group Presentations

The percentage of students who adequately developed and organized the content of their group presentations met expectations for Grades 5 and 11, and was below expectations for Grade 8.

Content in group presentations refers to the ideas, facts and information presented. In a good presentation, the content is accurate, complete and well-organized.

When rating the content in students' group presentations, teachers asked themselves questions such as, "Did students clearly explain the purpose and subject of their presentation? Was the presentation well-organized? Did the presentation have a strong, well-defined, well-supported position? Were explanations clear? Were conclusions supported?"

The performance of Grade 5, 8 and 11 students for content in group presentation is illustrated in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Content in Group Presentations, Expected and Actual Outcomes, by Grade

	Grade 5		Grade 8		Grade 11	
Level	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**
Level 4	5%	3.3% •	10%	10.1% •	20%	16.2% •
Level 3	25%	26.8% •	42%	30.3% ▼	54%	45.3% ▼
Level 2	51%	45.4% •	38%	36.7% •	23%	33.5% ▲
Level 1	19%	24.6% •	10%	22.9% ▲	4%	5.0% •
Levels 2-4	81%	75.5% •	90%	77.1% ▼	96%	95.0% •

Note: Percentages show the proportion of students who should have reached and actually did reach the indicated performance level(s).

▲ indicates actual outcomes **exceeded** expectations.
• indicates actual outcomes **met** expectations.
▼ indicates actual outcomes **were below** expectations.

Figure 16 shows that:

- The percentage of students who developed and organized the content of their group presentations adequately (Levels 2-4) met expectations in Grades 5 and 11, and was below expectations in Grade 8.
- Grade 5 students' achievement met the standards for all four performance levels.
- At Grade 8, more students than expected showed weak and inconsistent development and organization of content in their group presentations.
- At Grade 11, fewer students than expected achieved Level 3 and more than expected achieved Level 2.
- In general, group presentations by older students had more depth and richness of content than did presentations by younger students.

Language Use in Group Presentations

Language use in group presentations refers to grammar and word choice and to the emotional messages conveyed. When assessing language use in group presentations, teachers asked themselves questions such as, "Were students' points of view clear? Did students speak sensitively of others? Was language vivid, precise and accurate? Were all statements grammatically correct and related to each other? Were precise and varied words used?"

The percentage of students who used language adequately during group presentations met expectations at Grades 5 and 11 and fell short of expectations at Grade 8.

The performance of Grade 5, 8 and 11 students for language use in group presentations is displayed in Figure 17.

Figure 17: Language Use in Group Presentations, Expected and Actual Outcomes, by Grade

	Grade 5		Grade 8		Grade 11	
Level	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**
Level 4	5%	1.6% ▼	7%	4.8% •	18%	4.5% ▼
Level 3	28%	30.6% •	43%	34.6% ▼	49%	48.0% ▼
Level 2	53%	52.5% •	43%	46.3% •	31%	39.7% ▲
Level 1	14%	15.3% •	8%	14.4% ▲	3%	7.8% ▲
Levels 2-4	86%	84.7% •	92%	85.7% ▼	97%	92.2% ▼

Note: Percentages show the proportion of students who should have reached and actually did reach the indicated performance level(s).

▲ indicates actual outcomes **exceeded** expectations.
• indicates actual outcomes **met** expectations.
▼ indicates actual outcomes **were below** expectations.

Figure 17 shows that:

- The percentage of students who used language adequately in group presentations (Levels 2-4) met the standards at Grades 5 and 11 and was below the standard at Grade 8.
- Few students at any of the three grades tested showed insightful and perceptive use of language (Level 4) during group presentations.
- Fewer Grade 8 and 11 students than expected attained Level 3 performance.
- In general, older students used language more effectively during group presentations than did younger students.

Delivery Style in Group Presentations

Delivery style refers to the manner in which students delivered their presentation. Teachers assessing this element asked themselves questions such as, "Were students relaxed and self-confident while making the group presentation? Was there variation in the volume and inflection of students' voices? Was the presentation an appropriate length? Did students match the language used and the content of the presentation to the audience's knowledge and interest level? Did they use body language to display energy, create mood, convey information?"

The percentage of students who adequately delivered their group presentations met expectations at Grade 5 and was below expectations at Grades 8 and 11.

The performance of Grade 5, 8 and 11 students in presentation/delivery style during group presentations is displayed in Figure 18.

Figure 18: Delivery Style in Group Presentations, Expected and Actual Outcomes, by Grade

	Grade 5		Grade 8		Grade 11	
Level	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**	**Expected Outcome**	**Actual Outcome**
Level 4	5%	4.4% •	8%	12.8% •	17%	10.1% ▼
Level 3	25%	24.6% •	39%	25.0% ▼	51%	39.7% ▼
Level 2	55%	53.6% •	46%	43.6% •	30%	38.5% ▲
Level 1	15%	17.5% •	7%	18.6% ▲	2%	11.7% ▲
Levels 2-4	85%	82.6% •	93%	81.4% ▼	98%	88.3% ▼

Note: Percentages show the proportion of students who should have reached and actually did reach the indicated performance level(s).

▲ indicates actual outcomes **exceeded** expectations.
• indicates actual outcomes **met** expectations.
▼ indicates actual outcomes **were below** expectations.

Figure 18 shows that:

- The percentages of students whose delivery style during group presentations was adequate (Levels 2-4) met expectations at Grade 5 and fell short of expectations at Grades 8 and 11.
- Grade 5 students' work was consistent with expectations at all four performance levels.
  More Grade 11 students than younger students showed adequate delivery style in group presentations. Percentages of Grade 5 and 8 students attaining adequate performance were similar to each other.
- Fewer Grade 8 and 11 students than expected reached upper-level performance in delivering their group presentation.

STUDENT OUTCOMES FROM THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE TEST

Students participating in the assessment viewed a short video clip and then answered 15 multiple-choice questions about it. There were three different types of questions: comprehension, interpretation and analysis. Standards were not set for the multiple-choice test, thus, the commentary that follows provides only percentages, not expectations.

Results by Type of Question

Average student scores for the multiple-choice test by type of question appear in Figure 19.

Figure 19: Average Student Score on Multiple-Choice Test, by Type of Question

Type of Question	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 11
Comprehension	48%	63%	62%
Interpretation	61%	60%	52%
Analysis	54%	45%	45%

Multiple-Choice Test

The Grade 5 and Grade 8 multiple-choice tests included some questions in common to compare student growth across the grades. Examples of these questions include:

Comprehension:

1. What issue is Chuck struggling with in the video?

___ a) To continue his friendship with Ray
___ b) To steal the exam
___ c) To play on the team
___ d) To go out on Friday night with the "Dream Team"

Interpretation:

9. Why does Chuck get mad at Ray?

___ a) Ray embarrassed Chuck in front of Danny
___ b) Chuck thinks Ray should look up to Danny
___ c) Ray won't go out on Friday night
___ d) Ray won't help him steal the exam

Analysis:

14. What is the main purpose of this video?

___ a) To teach about friendship
___ b) To teach about peer pressure
___ c) To teach about making difficult choices
___ d) To teach about being popular

Figure 19 shows that:

- Average marks for the three types of questions at the three grade levels ranged from 48 percent to 63 percent.
- Grade 5 students' strongest area was interpretation. Their weakest area was comprehension.
- Grade 8 and 11 students were stronger on comprehension and weaker on analysis.

Comparison of Grades 5 and 8

The Grade 5 and Grade 8 multiple-choice tests included nine questions in common. This allowed for comparison between the grades to determine whether students' depth of understanding increased as they grew older. Results of the multiple-choice test showed that this was indeed the case. A larger percentage of Grade 8 students than Grade 5 students answered each of the nine common questions correctly. This difference in percentage of correct answers was small for some questions (0.5 percent) but large for others (29 percent).

STUDENT OUTCOMES BY GENDER

Gender Outcomes from Group Discussion

Students were assigned to three or four-member groups to discuss and work together in preparation for their group presentation. These groups varied from "all female" to "all male" in composition. Figure 20 shows, by grade, the average achievement for participation, active listening, and respect for conversational peers during group discussion. The arrows depict whether a particular group's achievement was above average (↑) or below average (↓).

Figure 20: Average Achievement in Group Discussion, by Gender Composition of Groups, by Grade

	Grade 5			Grade 8			Grade 11		
	Participation	*Active Listening*	*Respect for Peers*	*Participation*	*Active Listening*	*Respect for Peers*	*Participation*	*Active Listening*	*Respect for Peers*
Average Achievement[1] (on a Level 1-4 scale)	**2.51**	**2.61**	**2.66**	**2.58**	**2.59**	**2.77**	**2.69**	**2.83**	**3.02**
"All female" groups	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
"Majority female" groups	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
"Equal female/male" groups	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓
"Majority male" groups	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
"All male" groups	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

[1] – Average level attained across a Level 1-4 scale. (Level 4 is highest; Level 1 is lowest)
↑ – The indicated group exceeded average achievement for the specific grade.
↓ – The indicated group was below average achievement for the specific grade.

Figure 20 shows that:

- The "all female" and "majority female" groups achieved higher than average results in all aspects of group discussion.
- In most areas of group discussion, "all male" and "majority male" groups achieved below average.

Although some differences between each group's average and the grade average were small, the overall superior performance of groups that were "all female" or "majority female" was statistically significant.

Similarly, group presentation performance varied significantly depending on the gender composition of the participating student groups.

Gender Outcomes from the Multiple-Choice Test

Results for the multiple-choice test by gender and type of question appear in Figure 21.

Figure 21: Multiple-Choice Test Results, by Question Type and Gender

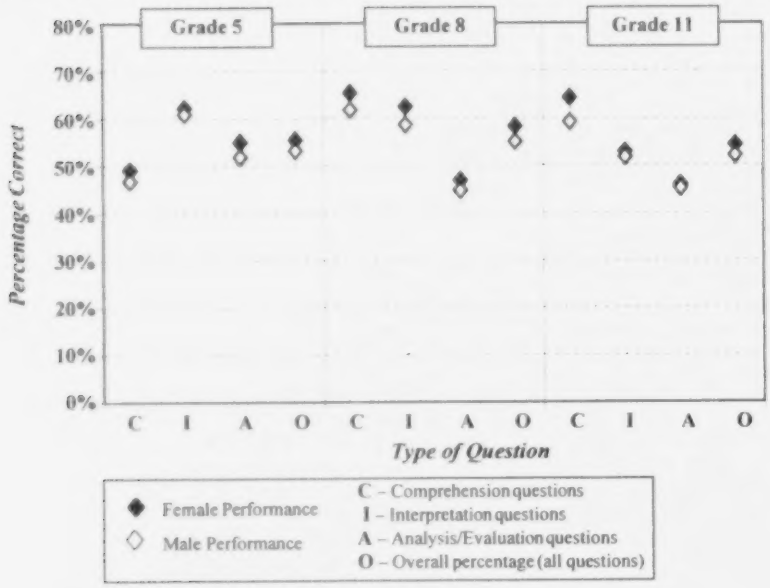


Figure 21 shows that:

- For all grades and types of questions, the overall performance of females was higher than that of males.
- Often these differences in performance were small. There were statistically significant differences for Grade 8 comprehension, interpretation and overall performance; and for Grade 11 comprehension and overall performance. None of the differences were statistically significant for Grade 5.
- Males and females followed consistent patterns for their performance on various question types in each grade. Grades 8 and 11 females performed best on comprehension questions and lowest on analysis/evaluation questions exhibiting the same pattern as males. Both Grade 5 females and males had the most difficulty with comprehension questions.

STUDENTS' CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

Students' classroom experiences influence what and how much they learn. As well, positive, enjoyable classroom experiences can create a life-long love of learning in a young person.

Students' perceptions of their classroom experiences, attitudes and practices are the focus of this chapter, but teachers' perceptions are included when appropriate. The classroom experiences, attitudes and practices covered in this section are:

- students' perceptions of the importance of listening and speaking skills;
- students' perceptions of themselves as listeners and speakers;
- frequency of speaking assignments;
- frequency of listening assignments;
- recording achievement on report cards; and,
- frequency of student self-evaluation.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS

Listening and speaking serve two important functions in the classroom and in life – the social and the intellectual.

Most students said that good listening and speaking skills will be important in their adult lives.

As a social function, listening and speaking are important tools for forming relationships with others. They also help individuals understand their experiences. Talking about experiences and getting feedback helps children put those experiences into the context of the larger world.

As an intellectual function, listening and speaking are a means through which knowledge can be articulated and exchanged. Speaking and listening to others encourages students to reproduce and transform knowledge as they discuss observations, evaluate information and compare views.

Students were asked how important they think listening and speaking will be in their adult lives. Their responses about the importance of listening appear in Figure 22.

Figure 22: Students' Responses to, "How important do you think good listening skills will be to you in your adult life?", by Grade

	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 11
Not important	1%	1%	1%
A little important	3%	3%	3%
Important	23%	27%	22%
Very important	63%	61%	71%
I'm not sure	9%	4%	1%

Note: Percentages may not total exactly 100 percent due to missing responses and rounding.

Figure 22 shows that:

- Most students said that developing good listening skills will be important in their adult lives. This was particularly true for Grade 11 students where 71 percent judged such skills to be very important.

Student Questionnaire data also showed that in Grades 5 and 8, female and male students had similar perceptions about the importance of listening skills in adult life. In Grade 11, more females than males considered good listening skills to be very important.

Students' responses about the importance of speaking appear in Figure 23.

Figure 23: Students' Responses to, "How important do you think effective communication through speaking will be to you in your adult life?", by Grade

	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 11
Not important	2%	2%	1%
A little important	5%	4%	3%
Important	26%	28%	27%
Very important	42%	52%	63%
I'm not sure	25%	10%	4%

Note: Percentages may not total exactly 100 percent due to missing responses and rounding.

Figure 23 illustrates that:

- Most students said that effective communication through speaking will be important or very important in their adult lives. The percentage of students giving this response was greater at higher grades than at lower grades.

At all grades, more females than males rated speaking skills as very important. This difference between the genders was most pronounced at Grade 11, where 25 percent more females than males said that speaking skills will be very important in their adult lives.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEMSELVES AS LISTENERS AND SPEAKERS

Students in higher grades perceived themselves to be better listeners than students in lower grades, but students' perceptions of their speaking ability were about the same in the three grades.

Students who are confident of their listening and speaking ability will probably speak more articulately and listen more attentively than students who lack confidence in these skills. Thus, high levels of confidence lead to increased success.

Students were asked to describe themselves as listeners and speakers. Students' descriptions of themselves as listeners appear in Figure 24.

Figure 24: Students' Responses to, "Which one of the following statements do you think best describes you as a listener?", by Grade

	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 11
I have great difficulty listening	1%	1%	1%
I have difficulty listening	5%	5%	3%
I am an average listener	35%	30%	23%
I am a good listener	46%	43%	50%
I am a very good listener	12%	18%	21%

Note: Percentages may not total exactly 100 percent due to missing responses and rounding.

Figure 24 shows that:

- Students in higher grades perceived themselves to be better listeners than students in lower grades. Fifty-eight percent of Grade 5, 61 percent of Grade 8, and 71 percent of Grade 11 students said they are good or very good listeners.

At all three grades, females perceived themselves to be better listeners than males. For example at Grade 11, 80 percent of females and 64 percent of males said they are good or very good listeners.

Students' perceptions of themselves as speakers are presented in Figure 25.

Figure 25: Students' Responses to, "Which one of the following statements do you think best describes you as a speaker?", by Grade

	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 11
I have great difficulty communicating through speaking	1%	1%	1%
I have some difficulty communicating through speaking	10%	8%	11%
I am average at communicating through speaking	34%	31%	35%
I am good at communicating through speaking	39%	42%	39%
I am very good at communicating through speaking	16%	14%	13%

Note: Percentages may not total exactly 100 percent due to missing responses and rounding.

Figure 25 shows that:

- Students' perceptions of their speaking ability were very similar in the three grades tested. There were only small differences across the grades.

At Grade 5 and Grade 11, females perceived themselves to be better speakers than did males. At Grade 8, there were only very small differences in the way the two genders perceived themselves as speakers.

FREQUENCY OF LISTENING ASSIGNMENTS

Listening involves identifying key themes and ideas in others' speech. It also involves attitudes such as listening with an open mind and skills such as paraphrasing for understanding and probing for more information.

Teachers at higher grades gave listening and speaking assignments less frequently than teachers

Teachers and students were both asked about the frequency with which students do listening assignments in language arts class. Their responses are displayed in Figure 26.

Figure 26: Frequency of Listening Assignments During a Regular Week, Students' and Teachers' Perceptions

	Grade 5		Grade 8		Grade 11	
	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers
Never	29%	14%	32%	17%	42%	24%
Once	35%	48%	38%	45%	39%	52%
Twice	13%	24%	13%	24%	10%	17%
More than two times	21%	14%	13%	14%	7%	7%

Note: Percentages may not total exactly 100 percent due to missing responses and rounding.

Figure 26 shows that:

- Teachers at higher grades gave fewer listening assignments than teachers at lower grades. Eighty-six percent of Grade 5 teachers reported one or more listening assignments per week. By Grade 11, the percentage of teachers reporting one or more listening assignments per week had declined to 76 percent.
- Teachers and students differed in their perceptions of how frequently teachers gave listening assignments, with teachers reporting greater frequency than students.

An Example of a Listening Assignment

The English language arts curriculum guides contain dozens of examples of listening activities, for example:

Directed-listening Thinking Activity

- *Choose a story with clear episodes and action. Plan your stops just before important events. Two to four stops are plenty.*
- *At each stop, elicit summaries of what happened so far and predictions of "what might happen next".*
- *Accept all predictions as equally probable.*
- *Ask the students to explain why they made particular predictions and to use previous story information for justification.*
- *Avoid "right" or "wrong". Use terms like "might happen," "possible," or "likely."*
- *After reading a section, review previous predictions and let the students change their ideas.*
- *Focus on predictions, not on who offered them.*
- *Involve everyone by letting the students show hands or take sides with others on predictions.*
- *Keep up the pace! Do not let discussions drag: get back to the story quickly* (Saskatchewan Education. (1998). *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Secondary Level.* Regina, SK).

FREQUENCY OF SPEAKING ASSIGNMENTS

Class speaking assignments give students opportunities to practise speaking, emphasize that speaking is an important skill, and offer students ideas for structuring their speech for maximum meaning and impact.

Teachers and students were both asked about the frequency with which students participate in speaking assignments in language arts class. Their responses appear in Figure 27.

Figure 27: Frequency of Speaking Assignments During a Regular Week, Students' and Teachers' Perceptions

	Grade 5		Grade 8		Grade 11	
	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers
Never	24%	7%	30%	17%	40%	35%
Once	32%	62%	42%	59%	45%	41%
Twice	17%	10%	12%	17%	9%	10%
More than two times	25%	21%	13%	7%	5%	14%

Note: Percentages may not total exactly 100 percent due to missing responses and rounding.

Figure 27 shows that:

- The frequency of speaking assignments decreased from Grade 5 to Grade 11. Where 93 percent of Grade 5 teachers reported giving one or more speaking assignments per week, only 65 percent of Grade 11 teachers reported doing so.

- Grades 5 and 8 teachers and students differed in their perceptions of how frequently teachers give speaking assignments. Teachers perceived more speaking assignments than students.

Examples of Speaking Assignments

The English language arts curriculum guides contain many suggestions for speaking assignments, for example:

Group I – Activities for often-used types of speech: *inner speech, conversation, talking circles, question and answer, discussion (both small-group and whole-class), storytelling, oral interpretation.*

Group II – Activities for less-used types of speech: *introduction, interview, panel discussion, seminar, business meeting, formal speech, illustrated talk, announcement.*

Group III – Activities for more limited types of speech: *debating and dramatization (role playing, improvisation, choral reading/speaking, readers' theatre, play reading).*

Group IV – Activities for primarily professional types of speech: *special and vocational speeches (e.g., toasts, election speeches, valedictorian speeches, introductory speeches, acceptance speeches)* (Saskatchewan Education. (1998). *English Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Secondary Level.* Regina, SK).

Recording achievement in a skill or knowledge area on the report card is a signal to parents that this area is important. In addition, knowing that their work will be graded and recorded on the report card motivates some students to do their best work.

Teachers at lower grades were more likely to record students' listening and speaking achievements on report cards than were teachers at higher grades.

Both teachers and students were asked about the way in which students' listening and speaking achievements are recorded on their report cards. Figure 28 gives their responses.

	Grade 5		Grade 8		Grade 11	
	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers
A mark is not given for listening and speaking	10%	14%	24%	29%	49%	52%
A mark is given (e.g. A, B, C, or percentage)	45%	36%	27%	29%	16%	17%
A participation or effort score is given	44%	50%	44%	43%	33%	31%

Note: Percentages may not total exactly 100 percent due to missing responses and rounding.

Figure 28 shows that:

- Teachers at higher grades were less likely to record students' listening and speaking assignments on report cards than were teachers at lower grades. Eighty-six percent of Grade 5 teachers reported giving a mark or participation effort score for listening and speaking achievement, in comparison to 71 percent of Grade 8 teachers and 48 percent of Grade 11 teachers.

- Fewer Grade 5 students than teachers reported that listening and speaking achievements are recorded on the report card. At Grades 8 and 11, the perceptions of students and teachers differed very little regarding the manner in which students' listening and speaking achievements are reported.

FREQUENCY OF STUDENT SELF-EVALUATION

Self-evaluation is an important component of student evaluation. Self-evaluation requires students to reflect upon their achievements and to compare their current performance to previous efforts. When students recognize progress and can identify weaknesses, they are often motivated to extend their abilities. Self-evaluation is integral to independent learning.

Teachers gave students opportunities to evaluate their own work. Those self-evaluations counted for more of older students' marks than younger students' marks.

Teachers and students were asked how frequently students evaluate their own work, and the percentage that students' self-evaluations count towards their final mark. Their responses appear in Figures 29 and 30.

Figure 29: Frequency With Which Students Evaluate Their Own Work During a Regular Week, Students' and Teachers' Perceptions

	Grade 5		Grade 8		Grade 11	
	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers
Never	26%	35%	32%	14%	52%	25%
Once	27%	31%	31%	45%	31%	61%
Twice	19%	28%	19%	28%	10%	14%
Three times	11%	3%	6%	7%	2%	0%
Four or more times	15%	3%	7%	7%	2%	0%

Note: Percentages may not total exactly 100 percent due to missing responses and rounding.

Figure 30: Amount That Students' Self-Evaluation Counts Toward Language Arts Mark, Students' and Teachers' Perceptions

Amount that self-evaluation counts towards language arts mark	Grade 5		Grade 8		Grade 11	
	Student Response	Teacher Response	Student Response	Teacher Response	Student Response	Teacher Response
None	29%	48%	34%	29%	53%	35%
1-10%	26%	45%	40%	54%	38%	52%
11-25%	19%	7%	12%	14%	4%	10%
More than 25%	24%	0%	9%	4%	2%	3%

Note: Percentages may not total exactly 100 percent due to missing responses and rounding.

"Student Response" refers to the percentage of students who said that their self-evaluation counts for the indicated amount of their mark.

"Teacher Response" refers to the percentage of teachers who said that students' self-evaluation counts for the indicated amount of their mark.

Figures 29 and 30 show that:

- Teachers gave students opportunities to evaluate their own work. This was particularly true at Grade 8, where 87 percent of teachers reported that students evaluate their own work at least once a week.

- Teachers of older students placed more emphasis on students' self-evaluation when calculating students' language arts marks than did teachers of younger students. At Grade 5, 52 percent of teachers said that they consider students' self-evaluations when calculating language arts marks. By Grade 11, this percentage had risen to 65 percent.

CONCLUSION

The 1998 Provincial Learning Assessment in English Language Arts (Listening and Speaking) yielded mixed outcomes. It found that Grade 5 students met provincial expectations for the dimensions of listening and speaking tested, and that Grade 8 and 11 students fell short of expectations in several of these dimensions. Fewer Grade 8 and 11 students than expected achieved adequate and higher-level performance in communicating and presenting information with appropriate language when organizing and delivering group presentations.

Although Grades 8 and 11 outcomes were positive for more than half the listening and speaking dimensions tested, improved skills would better prepare students for entry into the workforce. In most job situations, over seventy-five percent of time is spent listening or speaking.

The importance of listening and speaking skills is reflected in Core Curriculum, which gives these skills equal priority with reading and writing skills. However, at the time this assessment was done, implementation of the language arts Core Curriculum had not been completed in Grade 8 and had not begun in Grade 11. Full and effective implementation of the curriculum across all grades will mean increased focus on listening and speaking skills, and subsequent improvements in listening and speaking achievement.

Teachers can consciously plan for and explicitly provide students with guides, models and scaffolds for developing effective listening and speaking skills. Activities, including small-group work, can be structured to allow students to interact with each other and to experience a wide range of listening and speaking activities in a variety of contexts.

Parents and families also play a role in improving students' listening and speaking opportunities to learn. Although students report satisfaction with the support their parents provide for their learning, students do not have as many opportunities as expected to express their ideas and opinions, or to participate in family discussions. Parents, during family discussions, can model good listening and speaking skills and provide valuable practise and skill development for their children.

Students themselves can assume responsibility for activities that build their listening and speaking skills. Reflecting on work done is a way students can identify their strengths and weaknesses and make plans for improvement. Similarly, by committing time to language arts work at school and at home, students can persist to do their best work.

APPENDIX A: PROJECT DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

This assessment constitutes the third cycle of the Provincial Learning Assessment in English Language Arts. The previous two assessments were completed in 1994 and 1996 and focused only on reading and writing skills. These reports were published in January 1996 and July 1997.

The 1998 Provincial Learning Assessment in English Language Arts tested students' listening and speaking skills and processes in three contexts:

1. After viewing a video clip, students' individual listening skills were assessed using a multiple-choice test.
2. During a group discussion, students were rated for participation, active listening and respect for conversational peers.
3. During a group presentation, students were rated for content, language use, and presentation/delivery style.

Listening and speaking skills only were assessed. The 1998 Provincial Learning Assessment in English Language Arts (Listening and Speaking) did not measure students' reading and writing performance, nor their opportunities to learn in reading and writing.

It did not compare the performance of individual students or achievement levels in specific classrooms, schools or school divisions. Nor did it compare Saskatchewan students' achievement with that of students in other Canadian provinces.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ASSESSMENT

This assessment was overseen by a program team composed of teachers, administrators, professors from the Universities of Regina and Saskatchewan, and curriculum writers from Saskatchewan Education. Saskatchewan teachers developed the assignments during the fall of 1997 using specifications established by the program team.

The assessment materials were reviewed by the program team, teachers, consultants, subject specialists, administrators, and Saskatchewan Education personnel, including the Indian and Métis Education Unit, to ensure they were relevant to all Saskatchewan students and appropriate to Saskatchewan curricula. During the first months of 1998, the assessment materials were field-tested in 13 Saskatchewan schools including rural, urban and northern locations. At these sites, assessment materials were reviewed for clarity and applicability. On the basis of field-testing, materials were refined and streamlined.

Student and *Teacher Questionnaires* were designed to collect information about behaviours, attitudes and opportunities to learn related to listening and speaking.

ASSESSMENT FORMAT

An integrated assessment of the multiple skills of listening and speaking was used. The listening and speaking assessment instruments were designed to allow students to demonstrate the wide range of skills, including both verbal and nonverbal components, necessary to be effective listeners and speakers.

The test was divided into four parts:

1. **In part one**, students viewed a short video clip and then individually answered 15 multiple-choice questions. The multiple-choice listening test addressed three levels of understanding; the test included five comprehending questions, five interpreting/responding questions, and five analyzing/evaluating questions. Three of the five questions at each level of understanding in Grade 5 and Grade 8 were identical, thus allowing growth between the two grade levels to be measured.

2. **In part two**, students participated in a small-group discussion developing their group solution to the given assignment, and preparing a two- to four-minute presentation describing their group solution to the assignment.

3. **In part three**, students gave a two- to four-minute presentation to their classmates presenting their solution to the given assignment.

4. **In part four**, students completed a self-evaluation and a group-evaluation form, and answered a *Student Questionnaire* about their listening and speaking behaviours, attitudes and opportunities to learn.

The assessment took place between May 11 and May 22, 1998. The total time required by each student was 3.5 to 4 hours.

The *Teacher Questionnaire* asked similar questions to the *Student Questionnaire*, and included additional items on instructional matters.

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE SIZE AND PROFILE

Participating schools were randomly selected from the list of provincial schools teaching the Saskatchewan curriculum with Grade 5, 8 and 11 students. Selection criteria produced a random sample that proportionally represented rural, urban and northern schools. Schools of varying population were represented.

Criteria excluded selection of:

- schools that field-tested the assessment instruments;
- small schools that participated in the 1998 School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP), Reading and Writing Assessment, developed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada;
- very small schools that participated in the 1996 Provincial Learning Assessment in English Language Arts (Reading and Writing) or the 1997 Provincial Learning Assessment in Mathematics; and
- schools in *conseils scolaires fransaskois*.

In schools with fewer than 30 students in the chosen grade, all eligible students participated. In schools with more than 30 students in the chosen grade, a class of at least 25 students was selected.

Students enrolled in regular English language arts programs participated. Students in modified programs, where the foundational objectives of the course have been altered, did not participate. In other words, students in special resource room programs, English 21 or International Baccalaureate (I.B.) programs, or in locally-developed courses were not assessed. Regular program students requiring adaptations such as Braille or large-print forms, or scribes participated.

Figure 31 details the sample profile. The sample size permits reliable generalizations of results to the entire Saskatchewan student population sampled for the three grades.

Figure 31: School and Student Participation, by Grade

	Number of Schools Registered in Sample (March 1, 1998)	School Participation Rate (May 11, 1998)	Number of Students Registered in Sample (March 1, 1998)	Student Participation Rate (May 11, 1998)
Grade 5	29	100%	608	100%
Grade 8	29	100%	686	100%
Grade 11	29	100%	673	100%
Total	**87**		**1,967**	

APPENDIX C: ADMINISTRATIVE METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Selected schools and their school divisions were contacted in February 1998. Information bulletins outlined the nature and scope of the assessment for teachers, parents and students. The principal in each school selected a classroom for involvement in the assessment.

In early April 1998, the classroom teachers were contacted regarding their involvement in a two-day orientation session. The purpose of this orientation was two-fold:

- to familiarize teachers with the listening and speaking assessment; and,
- to provide general training for scoring students' listening and speaking performance.

During the course of the orientation, teachers considered common rater errors, and became familiar with the listening and speaking rubrics. They also practised rating student performance using videotaped clips of students working in groups.

Assessment materials were shipped to schools in April 1998 for administration between May 11 and May 22, 1998. Detailed guidelines were provided to:

- ensure the security of assessment instruments;
- prepare students for the assessment;
- allow for adaptations such as large-print forms, scribes or other special needs;
- ensure consistent administration of the assessment related to time, breaks, independent student work, absenteeism, the type of assistance provided, and scoring of student performance;
- provide instructions for the completion of questionnaires and assessment forms; and,
- ensure appropriate handling of student work to guarantee student, teacher, school, and school division anonymity.

School principals returned all test booklet materials, but kept the scoring rubrics for future use.

APPENDIX D: SCORING AND DATA ANALYSIS

In preparation for scoring their students' performance during the assessment, the 87 participating classroom teachers attended one of four, two-day orientation sessions held between April 27 and May 8, 1998. During the orientation session, teachers reviewed the assessment, considered common rating errors, and practised scoring videotaped group discussions and group presentations using the listening and speaking rubrics. During a group discussion the group's performance was rated for:

- participation;
- active listening; and,
- respect for conversational peers.

During a group presentation, the group's performance was rated for:

- content;
- language; and,
- presentation/delivery style.

The teachers rated performance from Levels 1 through 4 to describe the quality of the group's performance in each of the six dimensions. The same criteria were used to rate group performance at each grade. Different examples of group performance (exemplars) were used for each grade to illustrate the type of work expected to fulfill the criteria for that grade.

Accuracy training to facilitate fair and reliable analytic scoring included:

- carefully-worded criteria that defined each of the four performance levels in the six dimensions;
- discussion to develop a shared interpretive outlook on the scoring criteria;
- examples of group performance (exemplars) showing proficiency at each achievement level that served as references;
- limiting the number of raters trained in one session, thus allowing all raters the opportunity to play an active role in the discussion of the practice ratings;
- a wide range of quality levels for both group discussions and group presentations, thus including those that easily elicited consensus and those that provoked varied responses to provide teachers with a more thorough training; and,
- adjudication when necessary by a scoring leader during scoring practice rounds.

During the orientation sessions an accuracy check was completed for two group discussions and two group presentations. Figure 32 shows the level of accuracy achieved by the scorers.

Figure 32: Scoring Accuracy Achieved at the Orientation Sessions

	Accuracy	
	Check 1	**Check 2**
Group Discussion Dimensions		
• Participation	74%	61%
• Listening	61%	68%
• Respect for Peers	61%	71%
Group Presentation Dimensions		
• Content	51%	62%
• Language	58%	75%
• Presentation Style	71%	63%

Note: Percentages show the proportion of scorers who accurately rated the same group's performance according to the criteria.

During the assessment, 10 percent of classrooms were provided with spot-support. In these classrooms, group performance was rated by the classroom teacher and a trained rater from Saskatchewan Education. Figure 33 details the level of accuracy achieved during the double-scoring.

Figure 33: Scoring Accuracy Achieved During Spot-Support

Group Discussion Dimensions	
• Participation	71%
• Listening	64%
• Respect for Peers	74%
Group Presentation Dimensions	
• Content	82%
• Language	82%
• Presentation Style	79%

Note: Percentages show the proportion of instances where both scorers rated the same group with the same score.

The multiple-choice listening test results, *Student Questionnaire* data, and *Teacher Questionnaire* data were entered into a statistical data base. Item and test analyses were performed for each assessment form and questionnaire. Response patterns, item difficulty, discrimination indices, average scores, frequency distributions, and measures of test reliability were computed. Cross-tabulations and tests for significant variations were done for some test and questionnaire variables.

APPENDIX E: LISTENING AND SPEAKING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

SCORING CRITERIA – GROUP DISCUSSION

The group discussion is described in terms of three aspects of behaviour:

- Participation
- Active Listening
- Respect for Conversational Peers

Participation

- Participation in a group is shaped by a number of contextual factors, including intent or purpose, assignment focus, social structure and language.
- Group members must be willing to voice ideas and opinions, and share experiences.
- Participation must be measured on the quality of the participation as well as the quantity of verbalizing.

Active Listening

- Active listening is the most frequently used type of communication. Effective communicators are active listeners.
- One must be willing to listen to and hear the voices, opinions and experiences of others.
- To evaluate listening behaviour, one must observe nonverbal behaviour, such as posture and facial expression, and verbal behaviour. Proficient communicators adjust and use nonverbal behaviours effectively, and in keeping with their purpose, their individual cultural and linguistic background and the needs of the audience.

Respect for Conversational Peers

- One important dimension of membership in a group setting is the concern each member has for the others.
- Proficient communicators use various means to convey their awareness of and concern for the other members in the group setting. They acknowledge and understand the ideas and opinions of others, are confident and tactful in the expression of their ideas, and expect differences, showing respect for ideas and opinions different from their own.

For this assessment, student performance is classified into one of four levels of achievement. The descriptions reflect stages on a continuum: the development of listening and speaking skills in a group setting begins long before Level 1 as described here; similarly, students continue to develop beyond Level 4. Some of the characteristics and practices of students achieving the different levels are described. **Not every characteristic need be present to identify a student at a given performance level.**

GROUP DISCUSSION – PARTICIPATION: CRITERIA FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The criteria (rubrics) describing Levels 1-4 student achievement for participation in group discussion appear below.

Level 4 – Perceptive, Insightful

- *Intent/Purpose* – insightful comments advance and stimulate discussion; fresh perspectives given; some evidence of differing perspectives being discussed; occasionally, suggestions or proposals analyzed
- *Assignment Focus* – a clear understanding of assignment evident; effective approach used to thoroughly complete assignment
- *Social Structure* – work harmoniously together; members interject politely; members disagree tactfully
- *Language* – precise, clear language enhances mutual understanding of discussion issues

Level 3 – Thoughtful, Methodical

- *Intent/Purpose* – comments easy to follow and advance discussion; information beyond personal opinion shared, such as examples from other students, parents, teachers, magazines, books, or TV shows
- *Assignment Focus* – clear understanding of assignment demonstrated; appropriate approach used to substantially complete assignment
- *Social Structure* – comfortable working together – take turns, listen while others speak, offer recognition to others; most members interject politely and disagree tactfully
- *Language* – appropriate, accurate language promotes understanding

Level 2 – On Topic, Sustained, Mechanical

- *Intent/Purpose* – comments make sense and are relevant to the discussion; personal opinions shared with some supporting information
- *Assignment Focus* – mechanical understanding of assignment demonstrated; inquiry sustained until sufficient work done in students' opinion
- *Social Structure* – follow basic rules in conversing with others - take turns, usually listen while others speak, sometimes offer recognition to others, usually willing to accept group decisions
- *Language* – familiar language used with few embellishments; complex or unfamiliar ideas lack clarity; members speak clearly using appropriate volume

Level 1 – Sporadic, Weak

- *Intent/Purpose* – comments may address the assignment, however this connection or relevance not obvious; comments may inhibit discussion or promote digression; personal opinions shared
- *Assignment Focus* – limited understanding of or indifference to assignment evident; may be unable to sustain inquiry to adequately fulfill the assignment, or lack understanding of the amount of work required to adequately address assignment
- *Social Structure* – members may withdraw and/or allow the group to become disorganized or unfocused; logic and sequence of the discussion may be hard to understand; ideas are repeated; debating or arguing may occur without developing the issue
- *Language* – simplistic language used; elaboration, explanation, clarification of ideas absent; some words not spoken clearly using appropriate volume but meaning evident in context

GROUP DISCUSSION – ACTIVE LISTENING: CRITERIA FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The criteria (rubrics) describing Levels 1-4 student achievement for active listening in group discussion appear below.

Level 4 – Actively Interested and Involved

- *Ideas* – when necessary, members paraphrase what others have said to confirm or clarify understanding and allow for corrective feedback; probing questions asked of others
- *Social Structure* – verbal and nonverbal communication of others appropriately acknowledged and built upon
- *Nonverbal* – gestures or body language used effectively and deliberately to respond to, and sometimes shape, communication with others

Level 3 – Focused

- *Ideas* – respond verbally to ideas of others; may ask for clarification or summarize comment to ensure comprehension
- *Social Structure* – verbal and nonverbal communication of others appropriately acknowledged
- *Nonverbal* – effective gestures or body language used for emphasis (e.g., smiling or nodding encouragingly, gestures for emphasis)

Level 2 – Attentive

- *Ideas* – ideas of others acknowledged by gesture or phrase; occasionally members repeat the ideas of others to acknowledge or indicate support
- *Social Structure* – verbal and nonverbal communication of others occasionally acknowledged
- *Nonverbal* – effective gestures and body language used for emphasis, to show support or to get attention (e.g., students move into close proximity as group works)

Level 1 – Weak, Inconsistent

- *Ideas* – feedback may be offered only if requested; difficulty in responding to questions may be experienced
- *Social Structure* – passive involvement, or speakers often interrupted
- *Nonverbal* – effective use of gestures or body language is minimal or nonexistent suggesting indifference, boredom, or lack of involvement; ineffective or annoying gestures or body language may be displayed at times

GROUP DISCUSSION – RESPECT FOR CONVERSATIONAL PEERS: CRITERIA FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The criteria (rubrics) describing Levels 1-4 student achievement for respect for conversational peers in group discussion appear below.

Level 4 – Considerate, Courteous

- *Ideas of Others* – ideas and opinions of others acknowledged and understanding is sought and valued
- *Expression of Ideas* – opinions and positions of all members confidently expressed without affecting group morale or cohesiveness
- *Differences* – diverse opinions expected and sought out; differences clarified and areas of common understanding pursued

Level 3 – Aware, Tactful

- *Ideas of Others* – interest and curiosity in ideas of others demonstrated
- *Expression of Ideas* – opinions communicated without passing judgement (e.g., using "I" versus "you" messages); discussions facilitated and extended, persevering beyond initial impressions
- *Differences* – differences that arise are resolved or accepted tactfully/peacefully

Level 2 – Limited Regard

- *Ideas of Others* – ideas of others minimally responded to
- *Expression of Ideas* – some attention paid to the consequences of speech or actions on others; at times, taking turns or accepting suggestions from others is difficult
- *Differences* – differences that arise are sometimes ignored, sometimes acknowledged but usually left without resolution

Level 1 – Indifferent, Unaware

- *Ideas of Others* – contributions neither acknowledged nor responded to
- *Expression of Ideas* – little or no attention paid to the consequences of speech or action on others
- *Differences* – differences often suppressed or ignored; sometimes give rise to arguments

SCORING CRITERIA – GROUP PRESENTATION

Group presentation is described in terms of three aspects of behaviour:

- Content
- Language
- Presentation/Delivery Style

Content

- A proficient communicator has something to say and is able to share that meaning with others.
- An effective presentation reflects two elements:
  - the quality of ideas and information presented, and
  - the organization of the content.

Language Use

- Competence in language use is based on:
  - the appropriateness of language choices to the specific speaking situation;
  - the clarity of the speaker's language for conveying meaning; and
  - the speaker's ability to use language to create a unique personal style.
- Proficient communicators adjust and use language effectively in keeping with their purpose, their individual cultural and linguistic background, and the needs of the audience.

Presentation/ Delivery Style

- Presentation/delivery style refers to all voice and body behaviours that accompany the speaker's words.
- Voice behaviours include vocal quality, volume, articulation, pronunciation, rate, emphasis, rhythm and fluency. Body behaviours include facial expression, eye contact, gestures, posture and body movements. These behaviours occur and should be interpreted in clusters.
- Specific behaviours should not be looked for or counted unless those behaviours are so outrageous or pronounced that they interfere with transmission of the message.

For this assessment, student performance is classified into one of four levels of achievement. The descriptions reflect stages on a continuum: the development of listening and speaking skills in a group setting begins long before Level 1 as described here; similarly, students continue to develop beyond Level 4. Some of the characteristics and practices of students achieving the different levels are described. **Not every characteristic need be present to identify a student at a given performance level.**

GROUP PRESENTATION – CONTENT: CRITERIA FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The criteria (rubrics) describing Levels 1-4 student achievement for content in group presentation appear below.

Level 4 – Insightful, Provocative, Powerful

- *Intent/Purpose* – clear, articulate statement of purpose and subject; captivates audience and focuses topic
- *Position* – strong, well-defined with relevant, accurate, specific details that explain or support the position
- *Organization* – explanations and descriptions clear, memorable and cohesive; may introduce a new perspective
- *Conclusion* – conclusions clearly stated and substantially supported

Level 3 – Focused, Substantial

- *Intent/Purpose* – introduction has strong purpose statement
- *Position* – clear position with appropriate, substantial details that explain/support position
- *Organization* – explanations and descriptions focused and cohesive
- *Conclusion* – conclusions supported by data or evidence

Level 2 – Adequate, Practical

- *Intent/Purpose* – introductory statement informs, gives general purpose of presentation
- *Position* – definite but general position, some support offered
- *Organization* – explanations and descriptions utilitarian and generally accurate; supported by examples, facts, and/or statistics
- *Conclusion* – conclusions stated and minimally substantiated

Level 1 – Erratic, Sketchy, Disorganized

- *Intent/Purpose* – purpose of presentation not clearly stated in introduction; or introductory statement missing completely
- *Position* – some information given, may not directly relate to topic; may be presented in disorganized pieces giving vague idea of position
- *Organization* – explanations and descriptions incomplete or confusing; may use opinion as fact
- *Conclusion* – very thin data/evidence in support of ideas/conclusions; partial summary of major ideas; or presentation may stop abruptly without giving summary

GROUP PRESENTATION – LANGUAGE USE: CRITERIA FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The criteria (rubrics) describing Levels 1-4 student achievement for language use in group presentations appear below.

Level 4 – Rich, Memorable

- *Intent/Purpose* – point of view clear; development or support conclusive or complete; consistently speaks sensitively of others
- *Clarity* – creates clarity and understanding by using vivid, precise, accurate language
- *Structure* – all statements structurally correct and interrelated
- *Language Choice* – word pictures and phrases reflect the personality of the group; uses innovative, precise and varied word choices

Level 3 – Precise, Well-Chosen, Perceptive

- *Intent/Purpose* – point of view clear, with support coming from a variety of sources; usually speaks sensitively of others
- *Clarity* – uses clear, specific language with few errors
- *Structure* – most statements structurally correct and related to the topic
- *Language Choice* – choice and arrangement of words reflect the personality of the group; uses descriptive or humorous language to achieve effects

Level 2 – Clear, Adequate, Conventional

- *Intent/Purpose* – clarity of point of view attempted, using some supporting data
- *Clarity* – for the most part, uses clear, accurate language with some errors
- *Structure* – speech and diction adequate; a few lapses in sentence structure and grammar may be present
- *Language Choice* – avoids awkward phrases and wordiness; may attempt to use descriptive or humorous language

Level 1 – Vague, Awkward, Minimal

- *Intent/Purpose* – point of view may not be clearly communicated to the audience; may speak insensitively of others
- *Clarity* – uses vague or general language; at times, may be inaccurate
- *Structure* – sentence structure may be awkward, unclear or even unfinished; grammatical and structural errors present
- *Language Choice* – uses familiar generalized language; frequently repeats a favourite word or phrase

The criteria (rubrics) describing Levels 1-4 student achievement for presentation/delivery style during group presentation appear below.

- *Poise* – relaxed, self-confident, self-composed
- *Voice* – fluctuation in volume and inflection helps maintain audience interest and emphasize key points
- *Pacing* – effective use of pause giving sense of drama; length of presentation matches allotted time
- *Awareness of Audience* – excellent suitability of speech content and delivery to the audience's knowledge, interest and need
- *Body language* – natural movement and descriptive gestures display energy, create mood, and help audience visualize

- *Poise* – quick recovery from moments of occasional tension
- *Voice* – uses variation of tone, volume, and inflection
- *Pacing* – pattern of delivery successful; length matches allotted time
- *Awareness of Audience* – good suitability of speech content and delivery to audience knowledge, interest and need; may use humour
- *Body language* – movements and gestures generally enhance delivery

- *Poise* – attempts to maintain self-composure
- *Voice* – includes some variation of tone, volume and inflection
- *Pacing* – pattern of delivery generally successful; slight mismatch between length and allotted time
- *Awareness of Audience* – message reflects limited awareness of audience; may refer to common interests and experiences
- *Body language* – uses appropriate but minimal or slightly exaggerated body language

- *Poise* – minimal self-composure; or may demonstrate indifference
- *Voice* – uneven volume with little or no inflection and/or monotonous tone
- *Pacing* – uneven or inappropriate patterns of delivery; length does not match allotted time
- *Awareness of Audience* – message reflects little awareness of audience; occasionally off-target
- *Body language* – insufficient movement and/or awkward gestures may impede effectiveness of presentation

APPENDIX F: STANDARD-SETTING PROCEDURES

Standard-setting involves stating expectations for provincial student opportunities and outcomes for a specific assessment. Standards or expectations are not fixed or static. Expectations will vary according to the complexity of the assessment questions and tasks, the criteria used for scoring the assessment, the attributes of the student population being assessed, and the composition of the committee setting the standards.

The standards place an interpretive framework around the data, to show the strengths and weaknesses, and to allow the public to confidently judge the adequacy of the assessment results. Standards have been established for previous provincial reading and writing assessments, for provincial mathematics assessments, and for national science and mathematics assessments. The standards remain in place for discussion and comparison with the results until new standards are set to accompany the next cycle in the assessment.

In addition to the student outcomes, stakeholder representatives established opportunity-to-learn standards for nine elements relating to listening and speaking. Opportunity-to-learn standards were established, for the first time in Saskatchewan, during the 1997 Provincial Learning Assessment in Mathematics.

WHO SET THE STANDARDS?

A 26-member panel of educators and non-educators set provincial standards for opportunity to learn and student outcomes in listening and speaking. The panel was divided into three groups – one for each of the three grades tested.

Stakeholders invited to participate included:

- Gabriel Dumont Institute;
- League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents;
- Saskatchewan Association of School Councils;
- Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce;
- Saskatchewan Indian Federated College;
- Saskatchewan School Trustees Association;
- Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; and,
- University of Saskatchewan, College of Education.

IN WHAT AREAS WERE STANDARDS SET FOR STUDENT OUTCOMES?

The standard-setting panel defined expectations for six dimensions of student achievement.

- group discussion:
  - participation
  - active listening; and,
  - respect for conversational peers.
- group presentation:
  - content;
  - language; and,
  - delivery style.

Criteria were established for four levels of student achievement. Level 4 is the highest level of achievement and Level 1 is the lowest. The detailed scoring criteria appear in Appendix E.

For each grade, the standard-setting panels identified the percentage of students expected to achieve each level of achievement for each of the six dimensions assessed.

IN WHAT AREAS WERE STANDARDS SET FOR OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN?

Expectations were defined for nine opportunity-to-learn elements.

The classroom-related opportunities assessed were:

- working within small groups in language arts class;
- teachers providing guides, models, and scaffolds for developing good speaking skills; and,
- teachers providing guides, models, and scaffolds for developing good listening skills.

The student readiness-related opportunities assessed were:

- student persistence and quality of work;
- student reflective practices to improve their learning in language arts; and,
- student time spent doing language arts homework.

The parental support-related opportunities assessed were:

- parental encouragement for students to express their opinions and ideas;
- parental encouragement to involve students in family discussions; and,
- students' satisfaction with their parents' support for their learning.

The standard-setting panel considered the nine opportunity-to-learn elements for each grade.

For four elements, the standard stated the minimum number of times per week that:

- students work in small groups in language arts class;
- teachers provide guides, models and scaffolds for developing good speaking skills;
- teachers provide guides, models and scaffolds for developing good listening; and,
- students reflect upon their work in language arts.

For one element, the standard stated the expected number of hours per week that:

- students spend on language arts homework.

After setting the frequency or quantity standards for an opportunity-to-learn element, the standard-setting panels established provincial expectations for the percentages of Saskatchewan students who should have opportunity consistent with the standard.

For the four remaining elements, the standard stated the expected percentage of students:

- who persist to do their best work in language arts;
- whose parents encourage expression of opinions and ideas;
- whose parents encourage participation in family discussions; and,
- who are satisfied with the level of parental support for their learning.

WHAT PROCESS WAS USED TO SET THE STANDARDS?

Panelists set outcome and opportunity-to-learn standards using a three-round voting process. Panelists:

- reviewed assessment instruments, performance criteria, and background documents to better understand the context of the standards question;
- made initial judgements for the question using private ballots;
- discussed differences in their judgements after viewing the vote distribution pattern of the panel;
- made second-round, private judgements for the same question considering elements of the discussion;
- viewed a comparison of their second-round voting pattern with actual student outcomes or practices and discussed factors which may explain any differences; and,
- made their final third-round, private judgements for the same question.

The average of the panelists' third round of judgements became the standard for the question. The process was repeated for the next outcome or opportunity-to-learn standard question.